# SERMONS

Preached upon

## Several Occasions.

Never before Printed.

Z.12.69

BIBL. CANT. ICAD.

BY

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Late Vicar of St. *Lawrence Jewry*, and one of His Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

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To his Worthy Friends

# The INHABITANTS

Of the

# PARISHES

OF

# St. *LAWRENCE JEWRY*

AND

# St. *MARY MAGD. MILK-STREET.*

*Gentlemen,*

I Here preſent you with ſome Sermons of my dear Brother deceaſed, your late (if *I* may be allowed to ſay it) worthy and faithfull Paſtour; in tranſcribing them for the Preſs I have not preſumed to make any alteration, or to correct ſo much as the plain errata's of the original Copy, except onely ſome few, and thoſe

ſuch as any Reader almoſt would have obſerved, and may well be ſuppoſed to have been occaſioned onely through his haſte in writing; and if after all there happen to be any ſuch ſtill remaining in the print, I hope you will blame neither him nor me, ſince I pretend not to publiſh any diſcourſes deſigned or fitted by him for the Preſs, but onely thoſe very Sermons which you your ſelves heard, juſt as I found them in his notes.

If it be asked why theſe rather than others? I anſwer, theſe were the Sermons which I found had been preached by him in the moſt publick places; to which however becauſe they would not alone have made a juſt volume, I thought it neceſſary to add two or three more; and I doubt not but you will find them all plain and uſefull, and every way fitted to doe good: And if it be asked why no more? I think it will be time enough to anſwer

anſwer that queſtion, when I ſhall have ſeen what acceptance theſe now publiſhed meet with in the world.

It was ſome time before I could perſuade my ſelf to comply with your deſire in publiſhing theſe Sermons, becauſe I have ſometimes heard my Brother expreſs an unwillingneſs that any thing of his ſhould be printed after his death; but when I had once reſolved to print them, it took me no time to conſider, it was not left to my choice to whom I ſhould preſent them, ſeeing you had an undoubted title to them; and all the world would have blamed me, if I had not taken this occaſion of acknowledging with all thankfulneſs your extraordinary reſpect to his perſon whilſt alive, and to his memory after his deceaſe; one particular inſtance of which I muſt by no means omit, I mean your generous Preſent to his Widow; a kindneſs which as I

am

am confident he never expected, even from you, from whom he might have expected any thing that was kind; ſo I dare ſay if he could have foreſeen it, would have pleaſed him more than any, nay, than all the other kindneſſes he ever received from you.

In the words therefore of *Naomi* concerning *Boaz*, *Bleſſed be ye of the Lord, who have not left off your kindneſs to the living and to the dead.*

I am,

*Gentlemen,*

Your moſt obliged Servant,

*James Calamy.*

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IMPRIMATUR,

*Nov.* 29. 1686. Ex Ædibus *Lamb-hithanis.*

*Jo. Battely.* R^mo Pri ac D^no, D^no *Wilhelmo* Archiep. *Cantuariensi* a Sacris domesticis.


A SER-

# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

### The First Sermon.

ACTS X. 38.

*—Who went about doing good---.*

WHICH words give us a short account of our blessed Saviour's life here on earth; it was spent in doing good: They also teach us after what manner we his disciples ought to live in this World, namely that we should omit no fair opportunity of

doing good according to our ſeveral abilities and capacities. I ſhall ſpeak to them

I. As referring to our Lord and Saviour, and deſcribing his manner of life to us.

II. I ſhall conſider them as preſcribing to us our duty in imitation of his moſt glorious example *who went about doing good.*

(I.) As referring to our Lord and Saviour, and deſcribing his manner of life to us. Now theſe words, *he went about doing good*, eſpecially ſignifie theſe three things:

1. That this was the chief buſineſs and employment of his life, to *doe good.*

2. That where he did not readily find, he went about to ſeek objects of pity and compaſſion.

3. This he conſtantly perſevered in, notwithſtanding the foul ingratitude and malicious oppoſition his good works met with in the World.

1. This

1. This was the chief buſineſs and employment of his life to *doe good*. To propound to you the ſeveral inſtances of it, were to give you an hiſtory and account of his whole life, the four Goſpels being nothing elſe but the authentick records of thoſe good works *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* did, containing his excellent inſtructions, his free reproofs, the wiſe methods he uſed for the bettering and reforming men's minds, together with thoſe various kindneſſes he ſhewed to their bodies and outward eſtates with a generoſity and charity not to be parallell'd by any thing but the divine goodneſs it ſelf. I ſhall not therefore deſcend to particulars, but onely take notice, 1. That *doing good* was his ordinary daily employment. 2. That to the ſame end tended all his extraordinary miraculous works: and 3. That this was alſo the ſum and ſubſtance of his Religion. From all which it will eaſily appear, that he made *doing good* the chief buſineſs of his whole life.

(1.) Doing good was his ordinary daiemployment. He did not onely by the by, and on great occaſions exerciſe his

charity and compaſſion, but it was as it were his onely profeſſion, his meat and drink, his buſineſs and recreation too; ſo that he denied himſelf the conveniences of this life that he might attend this work. How was he throng'd after and preſs'd upon by the miſerable and unfortunate, the diſeaſed and poſſeſſed in all places whereever he came, and can you tell of any one perſon whom he ever ſent from his preſence diſſatisfied? It was but ſaying *Lord have mercy upon me*, and the poor humble beggar's wants (of what kind ſoever) were ſtrait ſupplied.

And by theſe acts of love and kindneſs he did engage men to hearken to his wiſe counſels, and obey his gratious commands, for he had a farther deſign in all this compaſſion which he ſhewed towards mens bodies and outward eſtates, *viz.* to heal their bodies and their minds both together; to inſtill and inſinuate good inſtruction, and to promote men's *eternal* welfare, by contributing ſo much to their eaſe and happineſs in this *preſent* life.

All this good he did with the greateſt readineſs and joy; it was his greateſt pleaſure

pleaſure to ſpread his healing wings over every place, continually to diſpenſe his benign influences and favours, and to make every one, who had the happineſs to converſe with him, ſenſible of his good-will to Mankind. Nor from this would he ever reſt, not ſo much as on the *Sabbath-day*, though he was accounted a Tranſgreſſour for it. He conſulted the good of other men above his own reputation, and would cure the ſick on that day even before thoſe who thought it a great piece of prophaneneſs and wickedneſs ſo to doe. He wanted objects ſooner than will to ſhew kindneſs; and nothing grieved him ſo much as that men by their own malice and perverſeneſs ſhould obſtruct and defeat his gratious deſigns toward them, and obſtinately refuſe to be made happy by him.

(2.) This was not onely his ordinary daily employment, but for this end did he always exerciſe his extraordinary divine power, to doe benefits. All his Miracles were mercies to men, ſo that his wonderfull works proved him to be ſent from God, not more by that infinite power that was ſeen in them, than by

that ſurpaſſing goodneſs they demonſtrated to the World.

He never employed his omnipotence out of levity or oſtentation, but onely as the neceſſities and wants of Men required it. His miraculous works were not ſuch as the *Jews* ſometimes demanded and expected from him, ſuch onely as would ſtrike their ſenſes and fancy with admiration and aſtoniſhment, as the making prodigious and amazing ſhews and repreſentations in the Heavens, or in the Air; but they were all expreſſions of a moſt immenſe benignity and charity to Mankind, ſuch as healing the ſick of all manner of diſeaſes, making the lame to walk, and the blind to ſee, and the deaf to hear, cleanſing the lepers, feeding the hungry, raiſing the dead, and caſting evil ſpirits out of thoſe that were miſerably poſſeſſed with them, and cruelly tormented by them.

In ſuch good offices, ſo uſefull and profitable to Men, did he all along exert and manifeſt that divine power which God had anointed him with, thus demonſtrating himſelf to be the moſt di-

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vine perſon that ever appeared in our fleſh, not onely by doing the ſtrangeſt and moſt miraculous works, but eſpecially by doing the moſt good in the World.

(3.) To *doe good* was the ſum and ſubſtance of his Religion. He affected not any preciſe ſingularities, or unuſual ſeverities of life. Of all the time he was here on earth, he ſpent but forty days in the Wilderneſs in cloſe ſolitude and retirement; the reſt of his time he converſed freely and openly, that thereby he might have opportunity of obliging and benefiting all ſorts of Men. He neglected not indeed any duty of piety towards God, but then his love to God ſhone forth moſt reſplendently in his inceſſant care of, and charity to his Creatures. He knew he could not pleaſe or glorify his Father better, than by bearing much fruit, or, which is all one, doing much good in the World.

His Religion was active and operative: it conſiſted not in notions or formalities, or external abſtinences and ſtrictneſſes, by which the ſeveral Sects

amongſt the *Jews* were diſtinguiſhed one from another; but the principal thing he was moſt remarkable for in his way of living was a moſt ſincere readineſs to doe all manner of good to all that came to him. He pretended not to any ſeraphick enthuſiaſtical raptures, or inimitable unaccountable tranſports of devotion, or wonderfull mortification; others might pray oftner and longer, faſt more than He or his Diſciples did, (as we know was objected againſt him by St. *John*'s diſciples;) but no Saint, no Prophet, no Man ever before him ſo ſerved God in his generation, or was either able or willing to ſhew ſuch conſiderable kindneſſes to the World as our bleſſed Lord and Saviour did.

And in this chiefly did his holineſs and godlineſs appear above the rate and pitch of other mens, in that he was ſo infinitely mercifull and charitable: He made not ſuch a pompous outward ſhew of Religion as ſome of the *Phariſees* did, but his actions truly beſpoke him what he was, a perſon infinitely full of goodneſs, that could not be at eaſe without continual venting it ſelf; nor yet by all the

wants,

wants, infirmities, neceſſities, either of mens minds or bodies could ever be exhauſted.

Thus he made doing good the chief buſineſs and employment of his whole life, which is the firſt thing ſignified by theſe words.

2. That *he went about doing good* implies farther, that where he did not eaſily meet with, he induſtriouſly ſought out objects of pity and compaſſion. His goodneſs did often prevent mens deſires, always ſurpaſs them, doing for them beyond all their requeſts or hopes. *He came to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt.*

He deſcended from the boſome of his Father, and eclipſed the glory of his Divine Majeſty with a veil of fleſh, and lived amongſt us, that he might redeem us from the greateſt evils and miſeries, even whilſt we were enemies to him, and deſired no more than we deſerved his love and favour. And whilſt he was here upon earth, he was not onely eaſie of acceſs, he did not onely courteouſly receive all that addreſſed themſelves to him,

him, he not onely freely invited and encouraged all men to repair to him for ſuccour and relief; but alſo did not diſdain himſelf to travel up and down the Countrey on purpoſe to give opportunity to all that ſtood in need of him, to partake of his healing vertue and power. Thoſe whom his Diſciples checked for their rude and troubleſome importunity, he lovingly entertained, and never diſmiſſed without a bleſſing.

This mightily enhanced the value of every kindneſs he beſtowed, the frankneſs of his doing it doubled the benefit. We ſpoil a good turn when it is extorted from us. It loſeth all its grace and acceptableneſs when it is done *grudgingly*, and *as of neceſſity*.

Nay our Saviour denied not to converſe familiarly with *Publicans* and the greateſt *Sinners*; he endeared himſelf to them by ſignal condeſcenſions, though this alſo proved matter of reproach and infamy to him: as if he countenanced thoſe vices he attempted to cure, or it were any diſgrace to a Phyſitian to viſit his patients. He refuſed not the civil of-

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fer of a *Phariſee*, though his ſworn enemy, and would go to the houſes, and eat at the table of thoſe who ſought his ruine: and whatever ill deſign they might have in inviting him, yet he always improved the occaſion for the doing them ſome conſiderable good.

3. And Laſtly, He conſtantly perſevered in this notwithſtanding the foul ingratitude and malitious oppoſition his good works met with in the World. Never did any one meet with greater diſcouragements, or more unworthy returns than the Son of God, when all his acts of beneficence, all the good offices he had done amongſt them were ſo far from obliging, that they rather tended to exaſperate and provoke that untoward generation; and the more kindneſs he expreſſed toward them, the greater haſt they made to betray and deſtroy him. This great Patron and Benefactour, this generous friend and lover of Mankind, was mortally hated and cruelly perſecuted, as if he had been a publick enemy, and had done or deſigned ſome notorious miſchief. They continually laid traps to enſnare him, loaded him with malitious

ſlanders,

ſlanders, greedily watched for an advantage to animate the multitude againſt him, took up ſtones to throw at him, as a reward of his gratious attemt to make them wiſe and happy; put bad conſtructions, and made ſiniſter interpretations of all the good he did, as if he deſigned to careſs the people, and by ſuch arts to gratify his ambition, and make himſelf popular. So that this great and gallant perſon was looked upon as a dangerous man, and the more good he did, the more he was feared and ſuſpected: yet all this and a thouſand times worſe uſage could not diſſwade him from perſiſting in doing good to them. He was ready to repay all theſe injuries with courteſies, even his bittereſt enemies were partakers of his kindneſs, and he ſtill continued to entreat them to accept of life from him, and with tears of true compaſſion bewailed their infidelity and wilfull folly. Nay at laſt when they laid violent hands upon him, and put him to the ſhamefull death of the Croſs, yet then did he pray to his Father to forgive them; and which is ſtill moſt wonderfull, and is the very perfection of charity, he willingly laid down his life for them who ſo cru-

cruelly and treacherouſly took it from him. Thus our Lord *went about doing good*; Let us who are his diſciples and followers go now and doe likewiſe: which brings me to the ſecond thing I was to conſider in theſe words, *viz.*

II. Our duty in imitation of his moſt glorious example, *who went about doing good.*

" But we, you'll ſay, are not in a capa-
" city, we have not ability or opportuni-
" ty of doing good in that ample manner,
" in that meaſure and degree our Lord
" did. We cannot by any means, (how-
" ever willing to it or diligent in it)
" come up to the perfection of this noble
" and heroical example. Were ſuch mi-
" raculous powers communicated to us as
" were to our Saviour, ſo that by a word
" ſpeaking we could heal all manner of
" ſickneſs, and reſtore ſight to the blind,
" and feet to the lame; could we in-
" ſtruct the ignorant, reprove the pro-
" phane, admoniſh the erring with ſo
" much eaſe, advantage and authority as
" our bleſſed Lord did, we ſhould then
" perhaps be very free and liberal in im-

parting

" parting thoſe great favours and bleſ-
" ſings Heaven had ſo ſignally beſtowed
" upon us, for the good and benefit of
" others; but alas! as things now ſtand
" with us, we have neither power, nor
" skill, nor means to doe good at all af-
" ter that illuſtrious manner our Saviour
" did.

To which all I ſhall at preſent reply is, that though we cannot after that ſtupendious manner be beneficial to mankind as our Saviour was, yet there are very many things which we are able to doe for the good of others, which our bleſſed Saviour could not doe by reaſon of his poverty and low eſtate in this World, without the expence of a miracle.

Few of us but as to our outward circumſtances in this life are in a far more plentifull condition than the Son of God himſelf was, whilſt here on earth: and it is in our power by ordinary ways to relieve and ſuccour, oblige and benefit many, ſo as our Lord could not doe, without employing his divine power to furniſh himſelf with means for it.

Be pleaſed therefore to take notice that it is not doing good juſt in the ſame inſtances, or after that ſame wonderfull manner, that this example obligeth us unto, but onely to a like willingneſs and readineſs to doe good upon all fit occaſions, as far as our power and activity reacheth; it obligeth us all in our ſeveral ſtations, according to thoſe opportunities God hath afforded us, and thoſe abilities he hath endued us with, and thoſe conditions of life his providence hath placed us in, to endeavour, as much as in us lieth, the welfare and proſperity, eaſe and happineſs of all men; ſo that others may bleſs the divine goodneſs for us, the ſtate of their bodies or minds being bettered by our imparting to them what God hath more abundantly beſtowed upon us.

Contrary to which is a narrow, ſelfiſh, ſtingy ſpirit, when we are concerned for none but our ſelves, and regard not how it fares with other men, ſo it be but well with us; when we follow our own humour, and with great pleaſure enjoy the accommodations of our own ſtate; when we

we think our own happineſs the greater becauſe we have it alone to our ſelves, and no other partakes of it: which of all other things is the moſt directly oppoſite to that benign and compaſſionate temper, which our Saviour came into the World by his doctrine and example to implant in men.

I ſhall not undertake to ſet before you the ſeveral inſtances of doing good to others, ſince they are ſo various and infinite, and our duty varies according to our circumſtances and opportunities, which are very different; and every one may eaſily find them out by conſidering what good he would have other Men doe for him. What he ſhould reaſonably expect or would take kindly from thoſe he converſeth with, or is any ways related unto, all that he is in like caſes to be willing to doe for another; ſo that this doing good is a work of large comprehenſive extent and univerſal influence; it reacheth to the ſouls and bodies of men, and takes in all thoſe ways and means whereby we may promote the temporal, ſpiritual or eternal advantage of others. And to ſo happy and noble

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an employment one would think there ſhould be no need of perſuaſion. However I humbly beg your patience whilſt I put you in mind of ſome of thoſe arguments and conſiderations which ſeem moſt proper and effectual to engage men to the imitation of this bleſſed example, to doe all the good they can in the World.

1. This of all other employments is moſt agreeable to our natures. By doing good we gratify and comply with the beſt and nobleſt of our natural inclinations and appetites. The very ſame ſenſe which informs us of our own wants, and doth powerfully move and inſtigate us to provide for their relief, doth alſo reſent the diſtreſſes of another, and vehemently provoke and urge us to yield him all neceſſary ſuccour. This is true in all men, but moſt apparent in the beſt natures, that at beholding the miſeries and calamities of other men, they find ſuch yernings of their bowels, and ſuch ſenſible commotions and paſſions raiſed in their own breaſts, as they can by no means ſatisfy, but by reaching forth their helping-hand: and to deny

our assistence according as our ability permits us, is a violence to our very natural instincts and propensions, as well as contrary to our religious obligations: Our very flesh which in many other instances tempts us to sin, yet in this case prompts us to our duty.

This is a gratious provision God Almighty hath made in favour of the necessitous and calamitous; that since his providence, for great reasons, is pleased to permit such inequalities in mens fortunes and outward conditions, the state of some in this life being so extremely wretched and deplorable, if compared with others; lest the sick and blind, and naked and poor should seem to be forgotten, or wholly disregarded by their Maker; he hath therefore implanted in men a quick and tender sense of pity and compassion, which should always solicit and plead their cause, stand their friend, and not onely dispose us, but e'en force us for our own quiet and satisfaction, though with some inconvenience to our selves, to relieve and succour the afflicted and miserable, according to our several capacities and opportunities. And this sympathy doth

doth as truly belong to humane nature, as love, deſire, hope, fear, or any other affection of our minds; and it is as eaſie a matter to deveſt our ſelves of any other paſſion as of this of pity; and he who, like the *Prieſt* and *Levite* in our Saviour's Parable of the wounded man, is void of all compaſſion, is degenerated not ſo much into the likeneſs of a brute beaſt, as of the hardeſt rock or marble. Thus to doe good is according to the very make and frame of our beings and natures.

2. Hence it follows that it muſt be the moſt pleaſant and delightfull employment we can chooſe for our ſelves. Whatever is according to our nature, muſt for that reaſon be pleaſant: for all actual pleaſure conſiſts in the gratification and ſatisfaction of our natural inclinations and appetites. Since therefore the very conſtitution and temper of our nature ſway and prompt us to the exerciſe of charity and beneficence, the ſatisfying ſuch inclinations by doing good muſt be as truly gratefull to us, as any other thing or action whatever that miniſtreth to our pleaſure; and it cannot be more

delightfull to receive kindneſſes than it is to beſtow them. A ſeaſonable unexpected relief doth not affect him that ſtands in great need of it with more ſenſible contentment, than the opportunity of doing it doth rejoice a good man's heart. Nay it may be doubted on which hand lies the greateſt obligation; whether he who receives is more obliged to the giver for the good turn he hath done him, or the giver be more obliged to the receiver for the occaſion of exerciſing his goodneſs. When we receive great kindneſſes it puts us to the bluſh: we are aſhamed to be ſo highly obliged; but the joy of doing them is pure and unmixed: and this our Saviour hath told us, *Acts* 20. 35. *It is more bleſſed to give than to receive*; and ſome good men have ventured to call it the greateſt ſenſuality, a piece of Epicuriſm, and have magnified the exceeding indulgence of God, who hath annexed future rewards to that which is ſo amply its own recompence.

Theſe two advantages this pleaſure of doing good hath above all other pleaſures whatever.

(1.) That

(1.) That this ſatisfaction doth not onely juſt accompany the act of doing good, but it is permanent and laſting, endures as long as our lives. The very remembrance of ſuch charitable deeds by which we have been really helpfull and ſerviceable to others, our after-reflexion upon the good we have done in the world doth wonderfully refreſh our ſouls with a mighty joy and peace, quite contrary to all other worldly and corporeal pleaſures. There are indeed ſome vices which promiſe a great deal of pleaſure in the commiſſion of them, but then at beſt it is but ſhort-lived and tranſient, a ſudden flaſh preſently extinguiſht. It periſhes in the very enjoyment, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, as the Wiſe-man elegantly expreſſes it; it preſently expires in a ſhort blaze and noiſe, but hath very little heat or warmth in it. All outward bodily pleaſures are of a very fugitive volatile nature, there's no fixing them; and if we endeavour to make up this defect by a frequent repetition and conſtant ſucceſſion of them, they then ſoon become nauſeous; men are cloyed and tired with them. Nor is this yet

all; theſe ſenſual pleaſures do not onely ſuddenly paſs away, but alſo leave a ſting behind them, they wound our conſciences, the thoughts of them are uneaſie to us; guilt and a bitter repentance are the attendants of ſuch indulging our ſelves, ſadneſs and melancholy comes in the place of all ſuch exorbitant mirth and jollity. Theſe are the conſtant abatements of all outward unlawfull pleaſures. Whereas that which ſprings from a mind ſatisfied and well pleaſed with its own actions, doth for ever affect our hearts with a delicious reliſh; continually miniſters comfort and delight to us; is a never-failing fountain of joy, ſuch as is ſolid and ſubſtantial; fills our minds with good hopes and chearfull thoughts; and is the onely certain ground of true peace and contentment.

(2.) This pleaſure and joy that attends doing good doth herein exceed all fleſhly delights, that it is then at the higheſt when we ſtand in moſt need of it: In a time of affliction, old age, or at the approach of death, the remembrance of our good deeds will ſtrangely cheer and ſupport our ſpirits under all the calamities

ties and troubles we may meet with in this ſtate. By doing good we lay up a treaſure of comfort, a ſtock of joy againſt an evil day, which no outward thing can rob us of. But now it is not thus with bodily pleaſures; they cannot help us in a time of need, they then become miſerably flat and inſipid; the ſinner cannot any longer taſte or reliſh them: nothing remains but a guilty ſenſe, which in ſuch time of diſtreſs is more fierce and raging, eſpecially at the hour of death.

Yet even then, when all our former inordinate pleaſures ſhall prove matter of anguiſh and torment to us, when all the flowers of worldly glory ſhall be withered, when all earthly beauty which now doth ſo tempt and bewitch us, ſhall be darkned and eclipſed, when this world and the faſhion of it is vaniſhed and gone, when the pangs of death are juſt taking hold of us, and we are ready to ſtep into another world, what a ſeaſonable and comfortable refreſhment then will it be to look back upon a well-ſpent life? to conſider with our ſelves how faithfully we have improved thoſe talents God

hath intruſted us with; how well we have husbanded our time, eſtates, parts, reputation, learning, authority, for the glory of God and the good of other men. The time will ſurely ſhortly come wherein you ſhall vaſtly more rejoice in that little you have laid out or expended for the benefit of others, than in all that which by ſo long toil and drudgery in the world you ſhall have ſaved and purchaſed. They are not your great poſſeſſions, lands or eſtates, nor your dignities and titles of honour, nor your eminent places and truſts, nor any external advantages you have purchaſed or acquired, that at ſuch a time will yield you any true peace or comfortable hope. What uſe you have made of them, and what good you have done with them, is that which your conſcience will then enquire after, and accordingly pronounce its ſentence.

3. To doe good is the moſt divine and God-like thing. By it we do moſt eſpecially become like unto God, who *is good*, and *who doth good*; and not onely like him, but we reſemble him in that which is his very nature and eſſence, and which

which he eſteems his greateſt glory: for ſuch is his goodneſs, which doth as it were deify all his other attributes and perfections.

There is no quality or diſpoſition whatever by which we can ſo near approach the divine Majeſty, as this of beneficence, and delight in doing good. As for knowledge and power the evil Spirits partake of them in a greater degree than the beſt men, but a man hath nothing of God ſo much as to doe good. By contributing to the contentment of other men, and rendring them as happy as lieth in our power, we doe God's work, are in his place and room, perform his office in the world; we make up the ſeeming defects of his providence, and one man thereby becomes as it were a God to another. Hence this employment muſt needs be the higheſt accompliſhment and perfection of our beings. It is the onely argument of a brave and great ſoul to extend his care and thoughts for the good of all men; and not to doe ſo is a certain indication of a little narrow ſpirit, contracted within it ſelf and its own paltry concernments.

4. This

4. This is the very end of all the bleſſings and ſeveral advantages God hath vouchſafed to Men in this life, that by them they might become capable of doing good in the World; this is the proper uſe they are to be put to, for which they were deſigned by the authour and donour of them; and if they are not employed to ſuch purpoſes, we are falſe to our truſt, and the ſtewardſhip committed to us, and ſhall be one day ſeverely accountable to God for it. For the Almighty and Sovereign Lord and diſpoſer of all things both in Heaven and Earth hath aſſigned to every man his particular place and ſtation in this World, hath given him his part to act on this great theatre, hath furniſhed him with powers and abilities of mind and body fitted for ſeveral uſes, in the due and regular improvement and management of which, every one may in ſome meaſure be helpfull and ſerviceable to others. This our Saviour illuſtrates by his excellent parable of the *Talents*, St. *Matth.* 25.

There is no man but God hath put many excellent things into his poſſeſſion,

to

to be uſed, improved and managed by him for the common good and intereſt: for men are made for ſociety and mutual fellowſhip. We are not born for our ſelves alone, but every other man hath ſome right and intereſt in us, and as no man can live happily in this World without the help and aſſiſtance of others, ſo neither is any man exempted or priviledged from being in his place ſome way beneficial to others,

It is with men in this World, as it is with the parts of the body natural. It is St. *Paul's* compariſon, 1 *Cor.* 12. the body conſiſts of divers members, which neither have the ſame dignity and honour, nor the ſame uſe and office, but every part hath its proper uſe and function, whereby it becomes ſerviceable to the whole body, and if any one part fails or is ill affected, the whole ſuffers for it, and the meaneſt part is neceſſary for the good of the whole; ſo that *the eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor* again *the head to the feet, I have no no need of you.* Thus hath God diſtributed ſeveral gifts amongſt the ſons of men, or they by God's bleſſing upon their induſtry

duſtry acquire particular art, skill and experience, ſome in one thing, ſome in another, none in all; ſo that it is impoſſible, but that every man muſt want ſomething for the conveniency of his life, for which he muſt be obliged to others; upon which accompt it is moſt highly reaſonable that he alſo himſelf ſhould ſome way oblige and ſerve others.

But beſides this there are many ſpecial favours and advantages which ſome men enjoy above others, which alſo are deſigned for the common good and benefit. It is plain that there is a very great inequality amongſt men both as to the internal endowments of their minds and their external conditions in this life. Many more *talents* are committed to ſome perſons than to others; but yet we greatly miſtake when we think them given us merely for our own ſakes, to ſerve our own turns, and for the ſatisfaction of our own private appetites and deſires, without any reſpect to other men. No, at the beſt they are but depoſited with us in truſt, the more we enjoy of them the greater charge we have upon our hands, and the more plentifull returns

God

God doth justly expect from us; *for unto whomsoever much is given*, saith our Saviour, *of him shall be much required.*

This ought especially to be considered by all those who by reason of the eminency of their qualities and dignities, and by their superiority above others, have vast authority over them, whose sphere is large and influence great, who have many dependents who court their favour and whose interest it is to observe and please them: what infinite good may such doe in the world, especially by their example?

5. Doing good is the main and most substantial part of Christian Religion, the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer, or service we can perform to God; and therefore do we so often find in Scripture all Religion summed up as it were in this one thing, it being the best expression of our duty towards God, and either formally containing or naturally producing all our duty towards our neighbour, whence this is said to be the fulfilling of the whole law. It is not enough that we give to every man what is due to him.

him. His Religion is but very little and of a narrow compaſs, who is onely juſt, nay he that is rigidly ſo in all caſes hath no Religion at all: that I have wronged no man will be a poor plea or apology at the laſt day, for it is not for rapine or injury, for pillaging or couſening their neighbours, that men at the laſt day are formally impeached and finally condemned, but *I was an hungry and ye gave me no meat, I was a ſtranger and ye took me not in;* you neglected to doe that good which you had power and opportunity to doe.

Some men are ſo taken up with their courſes of piety and devotion, that they have no time to doe much good; if they be but temperate and juſt, and come frequently to Church, and conſtantly perform the duties of God's worſhip, this they hope will carry them to Heaven though they are notoriouſly covetous and uncharitable, and hardly ever doe any good office for their neighbours or brethren. Some again there are who pretend to be of a more ſpiritual and refined Religion, ſpend their time in contemplation, and talk much of communion

nion with God, but look upon this way of ſerving God by doing good as a lower attainment, an inferior diſpenſation ſuitable to children and novices in Religion, and think that they are excuſed from theſe mean duties; and yet reade over the life of the beſt man that ever lived, the founder of our Faith and Religion, and you cannot but confeſs what I have already ſhewn you, that the great thing he was moſt exemplary and illuſtrious for, was his unwearied readineſs to help and oblige all men, *he went about doing good:* and it is a ſcandal raiſed on *our Church*, that we do not hold the neceſſity of good works in order to ſalvation, but truſt wholly to faith; for we hold and teach them to be as neceſſary as *Papiſts* themſelves can or doe, but then we ſay they are accepted by God onely for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt.

6. And Laſtly. Nothing hath greater rewards annexed to it than doing good and that both in this life and that which is to come. I have time now but juſt to mention to you ſome few of thoſe benefits and advantages, that do either naturally flow from it, or by God's gratious promiſe are annexed to it.

To

To doe good with what we enjoy is the moſt certain way to procure God's bleſſing upon all we have; it doth entitle us to his more eſpecial care and protection. *Truſt in the Lord*, ſaith *David*, *and be doing good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.* The divine goodneſs cannot but be mightily pleaſed to ſee men ſo far as they are able imitating it ſelf, and following the example of God's benignity.

For every good office we doe to other men we have ſome thing to plead with God Almighty to engage him to beſtow upon us what we want or deſire; not by way of merit or deſert, but God himſelf graciouſly becoming our debtour, takes what is done to others in ſuch caſes as done to himſelf, and by promiſe obliges himſelf to full retaliation.

By this means we provide againſt an evil day that which will mightily ſupport us under all the troubles and afflictions that may happen to us in this life; our good works will attend us and ſtand by us at the hour of death, as I have already

ready hinted to you, nay farther our good works will appear and plead for us before God's tribunal, and will procure for us for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, at the hands of our mercifull God, a glorious recompenſe at the reſurrection of the juſt; for at the laſt and final reckoning, when all mens actions ſhall be ſcanned and judged, the great King ſhall paſs his ſentence according to the good men have done or neglected to doe in this life.

Nay every way ſo great is the reward of doing good, that even wicked men, who yet have been of bountifull tempers and have had generous ſpirits, ſhall fare the better in the other world for thoſe good acts of mercy and charity they have done here; and in this ſenſe it is ſaid (with which I end all) that *Charity doth cover a multitude of ſins*, and to *cover ſins* in the Scripture phraſe is to forgive them.

Now of this ſaying there are ſeveral ſenſes given, which I cannot ſtand now to recite, but the words are true in theſe two ſenſes.

(1.) If he that is thus truly charitable, and hath done a great deal of good in his generation be also endued with the other vertues and qualifications required in a Christian, then though he may have a great many infirmities and miscarriages to answer for, yet these failings shall be overlooked and buried in his good deeds, and then they mean the same with that of the *Psalmist*, *with the merciful God will shew himself merciful*, he will shew him all favour possible.

(2.) Or else secondly, if you understand these words, *Charity shall cover a multitude of sins*, as spoken of a person, who though vitious in all other respects yet out of principles of common humanity or natural goodness of temper, or greatness of Spirit, is very apt and inclined to doe generous and great things for the good of the world; (which is a case that may sometimes happen,) they mean this, that though Charity alone will not be sufficient to make such an one happy in the other world, because he is otherwise incapable of it, yet it shall be considered so far as to lessen his punishment. He shall

ſhall be in a leſs intolerable condition, (though that be ſad enough) than the cruel and uncharitable, or than they who have delighted in doing miſchief.

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# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

## The Second Sermon.

1 COR. XI. 29.

*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's Body.*

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which we are now to receive, is undoubtedly the moſt ſolemn and venerable part of Chriſtian worſhip, a moſt excellent inſtrument of

Religion, an inſtitution of our Saviour's of mighty uſe and advantage to us, if we duly partake thereof; and yet there is hardly any part of Religion ſo little or ſo ill underſtood by the generality of Chriſtians amongſt us, as this duty: which ſufficiently appears from that great number of thoſe who conſtantly join with the Church in all other publick offices of divine worſhip, and yet wholly neglect the receiving of this Sacrament; or at leaſt communicate ſo ſeldom, as if they looked upon themſelves at liberty to doe it, or not doe it, as they thought beſt. I ſpeak not now of the prophane contemners of God and Religion, who deſpiſe this as they do all the other duties of God's worſhip; but of thoſe who pretend to the fear of God, and care of their ſouls, and yet live at eaſe in the groſs omiſſion of this duty.

Now amongſt the many pleas or excuſes with which men ſatisfy themſelves in the neglect or diſuſe of this holy Communion, that which moſt generally prevails, and perhaps with ſome honeſt and well-meaning perſons, is the conſideration of the words of my *Text*, *He that eateth*

*eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.* So dreadfull is the threatning and puniſhment here denounced againſt thoſe who receive this Sacrament unworthily, that men are apt to think it much the ſafer and wiſer courſe, never to venture on a duty, the wrong performance of which is attended with ſo great miſchief. Damnation is ſo terrible a word, and to be guilty of the *body* and *bloud* of *Chriſt* (as it is ſaid *v.* 27. *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord*) is ſo heinous a crime, that it may ſeem the moſt prudent courſe for a man to keep himſelf at the greateſt diſtance from all poſſibility of falling into it. Better never receive at all, than expoſe ones ſelf to ſo great hazard by receiving.

I hope therefore it will not be thought altogether unprofitable to entertain you at this time with a diſcourſe on theſe words, wherein I ſhall endeavour to give you the full meaning of them, with the true and juſt inferences and conſequences that may be drawn from them. In order to which I ſhall ſhew you

I. What is meant here by *damnation.*

II. What by *eating and drinking unworthily.*

III. How far this Text may reaſonably ſcare and fright people from this Sacrament.

IV. What is the true conſequence from what is here affirmed by the Apoſtle. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.*

I. What is meant here by eating and drinking *damnation* to a man's ſelf. The original word which is here tranſlated *damnation* truly ſignifies no more than *judgment* or *puniſhment* in general, of what kind ſoever it be, temporal or eternal. So that there is no neceſſity of tranſlating it here by the word *damnation*, nay there are two plain reaſons why it ought to be underſtood onely of *temporal* evils and chaſtiſements.

1. Be-

1. Becauſe the judgments that were inflicted on the *Corinthians* for their prophanation of this holy Sacrament were onely *temporal*; verſe 30th. *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep.*

2. Becauſe the reaſon aſſigned of theſe judgments is, *that they might not be condemned in the other world*, v. 32. *But when we are judged* (where the ſame Greek word is uſed which in my Text is tranſlated *damnation*) *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world.* That is, God inflicted theſe evils on the *Corinthians*, that being reformed by theſe ſtripes in this life, they might eſcape that vengeance which was reſerved for the impenitent in another life; and therefore it could not be *damnation*, that is, eternal damnation that was either threatned or inflicted upon them for their unworthy receiving.

The ſum of what the Apoſtle means ſeems to be this; that "By prophaning "this holy Sacrament they would pluck "down

" down ſome remarkable judgment upon " their heads. Of this, ſaith he, you " have notorious inſtances amongſt your " ſelves in thoſe various and mortal diſ- " eaſes that have been ſo rife in your Ci- " ty; and this God doth to warn you, " that you may be awakened to avoid " greater and worſe judgments that are " future and eternal. Now this puniſh- ment was extraordinary and peculiar to that time; for there is no ſuch thing found amongſt us at this day, namely, that God doth ſuddenly ſmite all unworthy Communicants with ſome grievous diſeaſe or ſudden death. Nor indeed are men afraid of any ſuch thing, though it is very plain that this is the true meaning of the words of my *Text*, that by ſuch prophaneneſs they would bring down ſome remarkable *temporal* judgment upon themſelves.

But I ſhall not inſiſt any longer upon this, but take the word damnation as we commonly underſtand it, and in that ſenſe, to eat and drink *damnation* to a man's ſelf, doth imply, that by our unworthy participation of the Sacrament, we are ſo far from receiving any benefit

or

or advantage by it, that we do incur God's heavieſt diſpleaſure, and render our ſelves liable to eternal miſery; and ſo proceed

II. To enquire who thoſe are that do run this great danger, they who *eat and drink unworthily.* Now this phraſe of *eating unworthily* being onely found here in this Chapter, for the underſtanding of it we are to conſider what the faults were with which the Apoſtle chargeth the *Corinthians*, and we ſhall find them to be ſome very heinous diſorders that had crept in amongſt them, occaſioned by their Love-feaſts, at the end of which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was uſually celebrated; which diſorders therefore were peculiar to thoſe times, and are not now to be found amongſt us, as, *v.* 18. *Firſt of all, when ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be diviſions among you,* they bandied into ſeparate parties; and *v.* 21. *In eating every one taketh before another his own ſupper*; that is, Whereas there was a cuſtome when they came together to commemorate Chriſt's death, to furniſh a common table, where no man was to pretend any pro-

propriety to what he himſelf brought, but was to eat in common with the reſt, this charitable cuſtome theſe *Corinthians* wholly perverted: for he that brought a great deal, fell to that as if it were at his own houſe, and at his own table, and ſo fed to the full; whereas another that was able to bring but a little, remained hungry. With ſuch irreverence and diſorder did they behave themſelves at the Lord's Table, as if they had been met at a common feaſt: this the Apoſtle calls *not diſcerning the Lord's body*; that is, they made no difference between that heavenly food and common bread; they ate the Sacrament as if it were their ordinary meat. *What* (ſaith he *v.* 22.) *have ye not houſes to eat and drink in?* ye may e'en as well ſtay at home and doe this; there is nothing of Religion in this, nor is this to celebrate the Sacrament according to Chriſt's inſtitution, whereby we ought to repreſent his death for the world, and to commemorate his love, and to devote our ſelves to him in new and better obedience, and not to make it a merry meeting onely to fill our own bellies.

But

But this was not all; for they were alſo riotous and intemperate in theſe Love-feaſts. They play'd the gluttons, and were drunk even when they received the holy Sacrament. Now this was ſo notorious and foul a prophanation of the holy Myſtery, to make it an inſtrument of debauchery, that we cannot at all wonder that God ſhould ſo ſeverely threaten and puniſh ſuch an high affront and violation of his ſacred ordinance. No judgment could be too great or ſharp to vindicate our Saviour's moſt excellent inſtitution from ſuch impious contempt. But now this is by no means to be extended to every little failure or omiſſion in this duty, or in our preparation for it, as if that did render us ſuch unworthy receivers as theſe *Corinthians* were, or ſtreight conſign us over to the ſame puniſhment.

Thoſe ſcandalous irregularities and excuſes are here called *eating and drinking unworthily*, which were heard of onely in the firſt ages of the Church, when the Sacrament was always joined with theſe Love-feaſts, which were therefore in proceſs of time wholly abrogated; and to pre-

prevent that intemperance and abuſe they had introduced, it generally prevailed to receive this Sacrament faſting. But whatever faults may be found now amongſt our Communicants, yet they cannot be charged with theſe mentioned in this Chapter. The worſt of men, if they do communicate at all, doe it with greater reverence and more ſuitable deportment than theſe *Corinthians* did. So that neither the fault here reproved, nor the puniſhment denounced, hath place now amongſt us. What reaſon then is there, why this text of Scripture ſhould fright any people from the Sacrament, whenas there is neither the ſame fault committed, nor the ſame puniſhment inflicted?

Though this be the juſt meaning of the words, yet becauſe this plea of unworthineſs to receive is often inſiſted upon to excuſe our neglect of this Sacrament, I ſhall farther and more largely conſider it by proceeding to the third thing I propounded to diſcourſe of.

III. How far this danger of receiving unworthily may reaſonably ſcare and fright people from coming to this Sacrament.

ment. And here I ſhall offer theſe few things to the thoughts of all ſuch as are ſeriouſly diſpoſed.

1. In a ſtrict ſenſe we are none of us all worthy of ſo great a favour and ſuch an high privilege as to be admitted to this Sacrament, or of ſuch excellent benefits as are conferred upon us in it. After all our care, after all our preparation to make our ſelves fit, yet ſtill we muſt acknowledge our ſelves *unworthy but to pick up the crums that fall from our maſter's table*, much more to ſit and feaſt at it. If we are not to receive this Sacrament till we can account our ſelves really worthy, the beſt of men, the more holy and humble they are, the more averſe would they be from this duty.

2. This unworthineſs is no bar or hindrance to our receiving this Sacrament. We are not worthy of the leaſt mercy either ſpiritual or temporal which we enjoy; muſt we therefore ſtarve our ſelves or go naked, becauſe we deſerve not our food or rayment? We are not worthy ſo much as to caſt up our eyes towards heaven the habitation of God's holineſs; but what

what then, Shall we never make our humble addreſſes to the throne of God's grace, becauſe we are not worthy to ask, or to have our petitions heard and granted by him? Shall we refuſe any favours the kindneſs of Heaven offers to us, becauſe they are beyond our merits, or more than we could challenge or expect?

It is not ſaid here in the *Text*, he that is *unworthy* to eat and drink of this Sacrament, if he doth it, *eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf*; if it were, then indeed we might all be juſtly afraid of coming to this royal feaſt, but he that eateth and drinketh *unworthily*: now there is a great deal of difference between theſe two things, between a man's being *unworthy* to receive this Sacrament, and his receiving it *unworthily*, which I ſhall thus illuſtrate.

He, for example, who hath groſly wrong'd, malitiouſly ſlander'd, or without any provocation of mine treated me very ill, is, as ye will all grant, utterly unworthy of any kindneſs or favour from me. But now if, notwithſtanding this unworthineſs, I doe him ſome conſide-

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rable kindneſs, and offer him ſome favour, his unworthineſs is no let or hindrance to his receiving it; and if he accepts it with a due ſenſe and a gratefull mind, and by it is moved to lay aſide all his former enmity and animoſity, and heartily repents him of his former ill-will againſt me, and ſtudies how to requite this courteſie, it is then plain that though he were unworthy of the favour, yet he hath now received it worthily, that is, after a due manner, as he ought to have done, and that it hath had its right effect upon him.

So we are all unworthy to partake of this holy banquet, but being invited and admitted we may behave our ſelves as becometh us in ſuch a preſence, at ſuch a ſolemnity. And if by it we thankfully commemorate the death of our Lord, and renounce all our ſins and former evil ways, and there give up our ſelves to be governed by him, and vow better obedience, and are affected with a true ſenſe of his love, then, though unworthy of ſo great a favour, yet we have worthily, that is after a right manner (as to God's acceptance) received this bleſſed Sacra-

ment. But if now unworthy of so great honour and favour, we also receive it unworthily after a prophane disorderly manner, not at all minding the end, use or design of it, without any repentance for sins past, or resolutions of amendment for the future, and without any gratefull affection of love towards our Saviour dying for us, we do by this means indeed highly provoke God Almighty, and justly incur his most grievous displeasure.

3. Those who are unworthy and are truly sensible of their own unworthiness, are the very persons for whom this Sacrament was appointed, and for whose benefit it was instituted. Were we not all sinners we had no need of such means of grace as Sacraments are, nor of such instruments of Religion. *Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. They that are whole need not the physitian but they that are sick.* Now it is an idle thing for a man to be afraid to receive an alms because he is miserably poor, or to be loth to take physick because he is dangerously sick. If we are truly sensible of our unworthiness, and, as we ought to be, duly affected with it,

this

this is a great argument and motive to engage us not any longer to delay the uſe of theſe means, but to haſten to the Sacrament, there to receive ſupplies and aſſiſtances ſuitable and proportioned to our wants and neceſſities: the more unworthy we find our ſelves, the more we ſtand in need of this holy Sacrament, whereby our good reſolutions may be ſtrengthened and confirmed, and divine power and grace communicated to us, to enable us by degrees to ſubdue all our luſts and paſſions, and to reſiſt all temptations, and ſo by often receiving this Sacrament we ſhall every time become leſs unworthy to partake of it.

There hath been a great diſpute in the world whether the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a converting ordinance or no, as prayer and hearing of the word of God read or preached are allowed to be; and many there are that have been brought to believe, that it is a duty incumbent on, or rather a privilege belonging to none but great and exemplary Saints, to ſtrong and well-grounded Chriſtians; that this Sacrament is not food proper for babes and novices, for thoſe

who often fail in their duty, who are ſtill onely wreſtling with their luſts, but have not yet got the maſtery or victory over them; that we ought firſt to be fully aſſured of our ſalvation before we come to this holy table, that this ordinance ſerves onely to ſtrengthen and confirm our faith and repentance and all other Chriſtian graces and vertues, but not to beget any of them in us.

Now here thus much muſt be granted, that this Sacrament doth belong onely to thoſe that are within the pale of the viſible Church, onely to baptiſed Chriſtians that do publickly own their faith and Chriſtian profeſſion; that it is no means of converting Jews or Infidels; and that even Chriſtians by notorious evil lives, whereby they become ſcandalous to their brethren and incur the cenſures of the Church, may juſtly forfeit all their right and title to this Sacrament; and farther, that it is a bold prophanation of our Saviour's inſtitution for any wicked perſon, reſolved to continue ſuch, to preſume to bleſs God for that mercy and love of a Redeemer which he doth not in the leaſt value. Thus far we are on all hands agreed,

greed, but not now to engage in any matter of controverſie, I ſhall onely ſay that I can ſee no reaſon why to one that is really ſenſible of his ſins and miſcarriages contrary to his baptiſmal vow and profeſſion, and maketh ſome kind of reſolution to forſake them; why, I ſay, this Sacrament as well as prayer or any other duties of Religion may not be reckoned as a means of begetting true repentance in him, of turning him from ſin to righteouſneſs, from the power of Satan to God; and for this I ſhall offer onely this one plain argument which is obvious to every man, that if the death of Chriſt it ſelf, his bitter paſſion, his whole gratious undertaking for us, was amongſt other reaſons deſigned by God alſo to convince us of the evil and danger of ſin, to bring us out of love with it, and to engage us to a new and better life, ſurely then the conſideration of the ſame things repreſented to us in the Sacrament, the commemoration of his death and paſſion there made, may alſo ſerve for the ſame great ends and purpoſes.

If Chriſt died that we ſhould die unto ſin, certainly then the memory of his death

may juſtly be accounted a proper means of killing ſin in us; nay what in the nature of the thing can be imagined a more likely inſtrument to turn us from a life of ſin to the practice of holineſs, than the frequent conſideration of what our bleſſed Lord hath done and ſuffered for us? and if ſo, it cannot be neceſſary that this change ſhould be completely wrought in us, before we ever ſolemnly commemorate his bloudy paſſion, for that were to ſuppoſe it neceſſary that the end ſhould be obtained before we uſe the means.

It is not therefore abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould be fully aſſured that we are in a ſtate of grace, and in God's favour, and have repented enough and truly forſaken all our ſins before we venture on this Sacrament; it is ſufficient that we heartily and ſincerely reſolve againſt them, that we approach the Lord's table with honeſt and devout minds, that we be really willing and deſirous to uſe all means to become better, and if thus diſpoſed we come to the Sacrament, I doubt not but we ſhall find it a moſt effectual means for the enabling us to leave our ſins, and to lead a better life. It is

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not our unworthineſs, but our reſolving to continue in that ſtate, that makes us unqualified for this Sacrament.

4. If therefore by your unworthineſs you mean that you live in ſin and are reſolved to doe ſo, and therefore dare not come to the Sacrament for fear you ſhould farther provoke God almighty, I will ſuppoſe that in this you act prudently and warily, but then I would adviſe you for the ſame reaſon and on the ſame account to leave off all other duties of Religion as well as this; if you would act upon the ſame grounds, you ought to reckon it the ſafeſt way never to pray to God any more, nor ever again to appear in any religious aſſemblies, nor to join in any part of God's ſolemn worſhip; for God hath often declared that he doth far more abominate all ſuch formal, whining, cringing hypocrites, and will more ſeverely puniſh them than the open and bold contemners of his authority and laws. *The prayer of the wicked man is an abomination to the Lord.* He hates the addreſſes of thoſe who call him *father* and *maſter*, and in words acknowledge him, but yet continually doe the

things that are diſpleaſing in his ſight. His ſoul loaths and nauſeates all the ſervices of impure worſhippers: You do but mock God, baſely fawn upon and impudently flatter him, when you preſent your ſelves before him as his people and ſervants, and yet ſecretly hate him and wiſh him out of the world; nay for the ſame reaſon for which you forbear the Sacrament e'en lay aſide your whole Chriſtian profeſſion, openly renounce your Baptiſm, deny your Saviour, diſown his Religion, for that is the ſafeſt courſe whilſt you reſolve to continue in ſin and diſobedience; for God's wrath ſhall be in the firſt place revealed againſt wicked Chriſtians, and better will it be in the laſt day for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorra*, than for thoſe who were called by Chriſt's name, and yet did not depart from iniquity.

If this pretence be true, that you go out of the Church when the Sacrament is to be adminiſtred, leſt you ſhould farther provoke God by unworthy receiving it, by the ſame reaſon keep from the Church altogether, leſt you as highly provoke God by being preſent at thoſe prayers you do not heartily join in, nor ever

ever intend to live according to. Or rather (to ſpeak yet more fully, what is the true conſequence of this) you now know your ſelves unworthy, and are reſolved yet, at leaſt for ſome time to continue ſuch; alas! what need ſuch as you be afraid of this Text? In this caſe it ought to ſeem indifferent to you whether you receive or not; Damnation here threatned cannot be ſuppoſed reaſonably to ſcare him from the Sacrament, who runs the conſtant hazard of it by living in known ſin. This can be no ſuch terrible word to an habitual and reſolved ſinner. He that can ſwear and talk prophanely, and live intemperately and looſely, and without any fear or regret commit mortal ſin, in vain pretends fear of damnation for not doing that which is indeed his duty; for it is a moſt odd and ridiculous thing to be afraid of doing what our Saviour hath commanded us, whilſt we are not in the leaſt afraid every day of doing what he hath forbidden us. How ſtrange is this for men out of a dread of damnation to neglect their duty, and yet at the ſame time not to be afraid to live carnal and ſenſual lives? Never therefore let any amongſt you, ſo long as

as you continue in your ſins, plead, that you are afraid you ſhould offend your Saviour if unworthily you eat his body and drink his bloud, and therefore dare not communicate; for your daily practice confutes this pretence, whilſt you notoriouſly break his Laws, and violate his Authority and ſcandalize his Religion.

You pretend fear of damnation; no ſuch matter, this is not the true reaſon of your abſtaining from this Sacrament. You are rather afraid the Sacrament will engage you to leave thoſe ſins you have no mind as yet to part with, that it will put you upon the practice of thoſe duties which are inconſiſtent with your profit, pleaſure, or ſecular intereſt. You are not afraid of diſpleaſing God, but of being too ſtrictly tied and bound to pleaſe him. You are afraid leſt that ſolemnity ſhould raiſe ſome ſcruples in your minds which you have no leiſure to conſider of. You would not be troubled with ſuch a ſerious buſineſs; you ſuſpect you ſhall not be able to ſin ſo ſecurely and quietly after it, as now you do.

Let

Let not ſuch therefore as neglect this duty, invent any ſuch pitifull excuſes, but confeſs plainly that they love ſin and the world too much, that they prize them above the benefits purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt, that they reſolve to go on in their wickedneſs for ſome longer time, and that therefore they do not come to this Sacrament. They are loth to engage themſelves ſo ſolemnly to doe that, which they find in themſelves no heart or will to perform. This indeed is the ſecret thought of many men, though indeed it is a very fooliſh one: for they are very much miſtaken who think themſelves at greater liberty to doe evil whilſt they abſtain from this Sacrament, for Chriſtians are engaged by receiving this Sacrament to no other obedience than they were before by their Baptiſm: it doth not ſo much oblige us to new duties, as enable us to make good thoſe obligations which our profeſſion of Chriſtianity hath already laid upon us.

5. And Laſtly. If the receiving of this Sacrament were an indifferent rite or ceremony, that might be done or omitted at

at pleaſure, then indeed the great danger there is in receiving it unworthily might in a great meaſure juſtify our omiſſion of it. But what if the danger be as great and the hazard equal of not receiving it at all, as of receiving it unworthily? where then is our prudence or ſafety, when to avoid one danger, we run into another every whit as great? when for fear of diſpleaſing God, we diſobey a plain command, and for fear of damnation commit a damnable ſin? for I can call it no leſs, to live in the neglect and contempt of this holy inſtitution.

It is not very eaſie to determine which is the greateſt affront to God, or doth moſt highly provoke him, never to perform our duty, or to perform it after a wrong manner; never to pray at all, or to be preſent at prayers, but not to mind or regard what we are about; never to receive this Sacrament, or to receive it often, but make no difference between what we and drink there, and what eat we do at our own houſes. But however, he that receives this Sacrament, although it be after an undue manner, ſeems to me to ſhew ſomewhat more reſpect to God and his commands, than

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he who wholly neglects it. And beſides, there is hardly any wicked man that dares come to the Sacrament without ſome good thoughts and reſolutions, or who is not for a little time before and after the receiving of it more carefull of himſelf and his actions; and though this doth not laſt long, but he ſoon returns to his former wickedneſs, yet however this is ſomething better than continuing in ſin and wickedneſs without any intermiſſion or ceſſation. Moreover, ſuch an one uſes the beſt means of becoming better, which by God's grace at ſome time may prove effectual; whereas he that caſts off all theſe duties is in a more deſperate and irreclaimable ſtate.

In ſhort, were there neither ſin nor danger in omitting this Sacrament, and yet ſo great hazard in the receiving it unworthily, prudence and intereſt might engage us to chuſe the ſafeſt ſide, and not to meddle with it at all; but if we expoſe our ſelves as certainly to God's anger and diſpleaſure by wholly neglecting this duty, as by performing it unduly, then theſe words of the Apoſtle can be no pretence or excuſe for our abſtaining

ſtaining from this Communion. For would not this be an odd way of arguing? becauſe intemperate eating and drinking is very prejudicial to our health, and often breeds mortal diſeaſes, therefore 'tis better never to eat or drink at all? would it not be madneſs, leſt we ſhould kill our ſelves by a ſurfeit, to reſolve to ſtarve our ſelves by obſtinate faſting?

And this ſhall bring me to the fourth and laſt thing I propounded to diſcourſe of; which was

IV. To ſhew what is the onely true and juſt conſequence which can be drawn from what is here affirmed by the Apoſtle, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf,* which is this: that foraſmuch as our Saviour hath plainly commanded all his Followers and Diſciples, to doe this in remembrance of him; and yet on the other ſide, there is ſo great danger in doing it unworthily, that we ſhould neither omit the duty (for that would be a plain tranſgreſſion of our Saviour's command) nor yet be careleſs in the performance of it.

And

And this is the inference which the Apoſtle himſelf makes, not that the *Corinthians*, whom he blames ſo much for their unworthy receiving this Sacrament, ſhould therefore forbear coming to it any more at all, but for the future they ſhould examine themſelves, and partake of it with greater reverence and devotion than they had uſed to do. Let the danger of receiving unworthily be never ſo great, the conſideration of this ought onely to make us ſo much the more carefull to receive it after a right and acceptable manner, and to put us upon greater watchfulneſs over our ſelves when we meddle with ſuch ſacred things. This is the uſe we ought to make of theſe words of the Apoſtle, not raſhly or precipitantly without due preparation or conſideration to ruſh upon this holy Sacrament, but ſeriouſly to mind the end and deſign of it, and ſo duely to affect our ſpirits with the things repreſented to us by it, that they may make lively and laſting impreſſions upon us, and we may bring forth the fruit of all in a holy and unblamable converſation in the world.

To

To end all, I would not have any thing I have now ſaid upon this ſubject to you, ſo interpreted or underſtood, as in the leaſt to take away from the reverence you have of this inſtitution, or to leſſen that awe and dread you have of receiving it unworthily. Onely I would not have men afraid of, or ſcruple doing their duty. There is preparation and good diſpoſition of mind required for prayer and the right performance of other religious duties, as well as this of the Sacrament.

We ought therefore to be afraid of theſe three things.

1. Of neglecting to receive this Sacrament, for that is to live in diſobedience to a plain command of our Saviour.

2. Of receiving it unworthily without reverence or attention to the meaning of it, without hearty repentance and ſincere reſolution of amendment, for that is to affront and prophane our Saviour's moſt excellent inſtitution.

3. Of

3. Of turning to your evil courſes after receiving it: for then your having taken this Sacrament will be a great aggravation both of your ſin and condemnation.

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# SERMON

Preached before the Late

# KING

AT

## *NEW-MARKET.*

The Third Sermon.

PROV. I. 10.

*——If Sinners entice thee conſent thou not.*

IN Scripture we often find that the evil Spirits are repreſented as *Tempters*, *going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, ſeeking whom they may devour*; and to that end as fur-

niſhed with all manner of wiles and devices, by which they may enſnare and deceive Mankind. They would not be unhappy alone, and therefore bend all their ſtudy and cunning to involve Men in the ſame ruine they have plunged themſelves into.

Yet theſe are not our *onely* Enemies, whom we are to watch againſt or reſiſt. There are many in our own ſhape, who though their Feet are not cloven, yet drive on the ſame deſign, and are the Devil's Agents, and uſe their wit and parts to ſet up his Kingdom in the World, by enticing Men to, and pleading for Sin and Irreligion. And this they doe juſt for the ſame ill-natured reaſon; namely, to make others as bad as themſelves, that they may be alſo as miſerable; that this may a little comfort them againſt the gnawing fears of future puniſhments, that if they ſhould chance to befall them, as is threatned, yet they have made ſure of company enough.

And this may afford us one Conſideration of no little force to ſecure us againſt the ſolicitations of Sinners, that though

though they may pretend to great love and kindneſs, and tell us of the excellency and bravery of being wicked, and undertake to anſwer all the ſcruples and coyneſs of our Conſciences; yet the bottom of all is onely to engage us in the perills and dangerous adventures they have run themſelves into: They cannot endure to think that if the great Doctrines of Religion ſhould at laſt prove true, any ſhould be likely to fare better in the other ſtate than themſelves; they hope either by their number to bear down God Almighty to pity and pardon, or at leaſt that when they are ſo many, they ſhall help one another more chearfully to ſuffer the worſt that can happen to them.

But now would we count it reaſonable for a Man to perſuade us to be ſick with him? or becauſe he hath undone himſelf and is loſt and ruin'd, that we ſhould therefore bring our ſelves into the ſame circumſtances and condition? In our temporal affairs we are not thus eaſie and flexible, nor can Men in their wits by any means be prevailed upon to hazard their lives and fortunes for the gratifying the vain humour of any deſperate

perſon, who hath forfeited his own; and why then ſhould we be ſo fooliſhly ſoft as to part with all that can be called truly good, and venture our everlaſting concernments and immortal Souls onely to bear thoſe company who are reſolved to be damned? Wherefore of old in all places where civility and good manners have obtained, ſuch as have taken up that vile trade of debauching others, and enticing them to ſin, have been always branded with marks of infamy, and accounted and dealt with, as the very peſts and publick enemies of mankind.

But I ſuppoſe there is not much need of convincing you, that it is your intereſt to follow this advice of the wiſe man. Every one will readily grant that it is good and wholeſome counſel, not to conſent to the enticings of evil and wicked men; the onely difficulty is in the practiſing of it, eſpecially in a time when ſin is not onely grown into faſhion, but into very great reputation.

It would be well if the ſad complaints of the hideous degeneracy and profaneneſs of this preſent age were as unjuſt as they

they are frequent; it is the humour of too many to admire and commend all the perſons that lived, and every thing that was done before they were born, whilſt they pleaſe themſelves in nothing more than in continually lamenting and bemoaning the ſins and misfortunes of their own days. And whatever times ſuch had lived in, 'tis like they would have pickt out matter of diſcontent, having no better way of ſhewing their own wiſedom or goodneſs than by finding fault with others. But however thus much is certain, that ſince the World is always ſo throng'd and thickly beſet with wicked men (and we have no reaſon to doubt but that we at this time have our ſhare of them amongſt us) ſince the beſt of us all are ſo apt to be miſled, ſurprized or betrayed into ſin, we have great need, if we would preſerve our innocence, to fortifie our minds with all ſuch conſiderations as may help us to withſtand the reſtleſs allurements and ſubtile enticing of thoſe, who not onely themſelves doe things that are evil, but rejoice in making others doe the ſame.

I ſhall at this time diſcourſe onely of theſe two ways by which thoſe that entice men to vitious practices ordinarily prevail with them, *viz.* either by their example, or elſe by arguing for and excuſing of ſin, and ſhall endeavour to make out how unreaſonable it is to be moved by either of them.

I. *Conſent not when you are enticed to ſin by bad examples.* He that is tempted onely by his own wicked ſelf, and *drawn away with his own luſts*, doubts oftentimes and is afraid, and ſometimes repents and forbears; but when his own inward propenſions and inclinations are ſeconded and back'd with bad examples, eſpecially if they are numerous and given by men of authority, intereſt and name in the World; when by them he is encouraged and urged to that which of himſelf he had no little mind to; then doth Vice become ſtrong and triumphant, the temptation is then at the full height, and it is hard for a Man to ſtand it out. When thus there is a confederacy and combination of ſinners, when *wickedneſs joins*, as it were, *hand to hand*, and draws it

it ſelf into leagues, when the road is ſmoothed and the paſſage made broad and plain by the tramplings of others before us, then we are in great danger either of being hurried on in the Crowd or elſe of being by degrees inveigled to venture our ſelves with thoſe to whom we cannot but think we do owe a great regard. Vice then becomes popular and creditable, and he that ſtartles at the commiſſion of any Sin when he is alone, ſhall make no ſtop or ſcruple when he hath the invitation and approbation of ſo many; for he ſins now by conſent and ſympathy, and hath the opinion of others to vouch him; when Conſcience accuſeth, or vertuous men reprove him, he hath his authorities ready to produce for his wickedneſs, and can quote others to juſtifie his debaucheries.

Sin is infectious, and when it once gets head, and men dare be openly prophane, it ſpreads like a contagious diſeaſe; and though for ſome time we ſhould keep our ſelves untainted, yet by degrees we ſhall be apt to loſe that averſeneſs and abhorrence we had of it; it will not ſeem ſo ſtrange and diſmal a thing to us, it will

will become more familiar, and then we ſhall proceed to wiſh our ſelves free that we might alſo doe the ſame; to long and hancker after a greater liberty, to think our ſelves too hard tied up, and then the next ſtep is running with others into the like exceſs of riot. The ſenſe and apprehenſion we have of any danger cannot but be much abated when we ſee the greateſt part of men continually to outbrave, and daringly to defie it, and it is hard to retain a juſt value for goodneſs when it is deſpiſed and contemned by thoſe who are famed for their wit and prudence in other things.

But though by experience we find that examples do thus ſtrongly influence men, yet that they ſhould doe ſo, reaſon there is none: for what can argue greater ſtupidity and unmanlineſs than at a venture to take every thing for better for worſe, and to go on onely for company ſake, and leave all matters, though we are never ſo deeply concerned in them, to be judged of onely by others? What doth reaſon or underſtanding advantage him who lives wholly by precedent, and is always what others pleaſe to make him?

"But

" But alas! it is very tedious and " troubleſome for a man to examine his " own ways, and ask himſelf a reaſon of " every ſtep he takes. It would coſt too " much time and pains to be wary and " thoughtfull, and conſider always what " ought to be ſpoken or done next; this " is a dull and methodical way of living: " but to be always poiſed, to be indiffe- " rent to every thing, to wait the next " tide, and to follow the next hint, this " is gay, and free, and eaſie. But be it as eaſie as it will, it is nevertheleſs no other than the life of Beaſts who herd together, and follow one another, and love to be in the ſame track.

But more particularly; men are led by examples, and tempted to doe as the moſt doe, chiefly on one of theſe accounts, either that they may not be thought ſingular, or which is worſe rude and uncivil, or elſe that they may avoid ſcoffs and reproaches.

1. To avoid the imputation of ſingularity: and this indeed muſt neceſſarily be laid to the charge of good and vertuous

ous men, ſo long as the greateſt part of the World is wicked and ſenſual: But then it is to be conſidered that it is ſuch a ſingularity as is moſt honourable, and redounds the more to our credit, by how much the fewer are of our ſide. 'Tis true, to affect ſingularity in any indifferent or trivial matter is unbecoming and ridiculous; but Men were never afraid of being ſingular in any excellency: and though Religion and innocence may not always meet with that eſteem, which is due to them, yet it is ſtrange that any one ſhould ever think them ſcandalous.

If this caſt any diſparagement upon piety and vertue, that there are but few in the World that heartily regard them, it does equally on all things that are extraordinary and really praiſe-worthy. Are men aſhamed of being counted ſingular in any knowledge or wiſedom, in any skill or trade? and why ſhould it be otherwiſe in the inſtance of true goodneſs, the higheſt perfection our natures are capable of? are not great honours and eſtates as liable to this exception, ſince there are but few that can deſerve the one or acquire the other? and yet men

men rather vaunt and glory in ſuch things as theſe, which diſtinguiſh them from the vulgar rout, and uſually reckon thoſe the moſt deſirable accompliſhments which few are maſters of; why then ſhould this prejudice men againſt Religion, that the greateſt part of the World are fools, and are contented to be miſerable?

2. We muſt follow, ſay they, the examples of others, and doe as the moſt doe, or elſe we ſhall be counted rude and uncivil; we ſhall be thought ill-manner'd and to want faſhionable breeding. And this alone hath ſo far prevailed in the World, that I doubt not but there are many who make themſelves ſeem to be worſe than really they are, and boaſt of ſins which they never durſt commit, onely that they may not be without this mark and character of Gentility; who hypocritically diſſemble wickedneſs, that they may gain the name and reputation of Gentlemen, and may not be thought preciſe or godly.

But ſurely it is a ſign of a mean, low and baſe ſpirit, and doth not ſuit with that braveneſs and gallantry of mind, which

which is or ought to be in all Gentlemen, to ſuffer themſelves thus to be uſurped upon, and ſo tamely to ſubmit to mere wicked cuſtomes; and inſtead of all thoſe good qualities and diſpoſitions and vertuous actions to which their Forefathers owed their good names and great titles, to value themſelves or others upon the account of ſuch vices, as in former times were found onely in Clowns and Beggars.

This indeed is the proof of a very wicked and degenerate age, and a notorious ſign that irreligion appears with a very bold face, when it is accounted a piece of bad manners and becoming onely thoſe of a mean rank to own a reverence for that Sovereign Majeſty who made us all, and a due reſpect to thoſe Laws, which not ſo much his power and dominion over us, as our own intereſt and ſelf-love do oblige us to obſerve; when we ſhall be called rude unleſs, beſides the hopes of eternal happineſs, we fooliſhly hazard the loſs of our health, peace, and every thing elſe that is truly valuable for a momentany ſatisfaction merely out of compliance with our company;

pany; when to be able to walk, ſtand, or ſpeak ſenſe, ſhall be thought an indecent thing, an uncivil trick put upon thoſe whom we either chanc'd or were forced to converſe with; to name no more, when it ſhall be eſteemed leſs diſhonourable to be a murtherer than to forgive ſome petty injury, or put up any ſmall affront. We ſhould therefore in this caſe ſay as *David* did when he danced before the Ark of the Lord, and was derided for it, *If this be vile, I will yet be more vile than thus.* If meekneſs and patience, chaſtity and temperance, the fear of God and true Religion be uncivil and ungentile, we will yet be more uncivil and ungentile; and I ſhould as ſoon be perſuaded that it was rude and clowniſh not to pledge one who drank to me in rank poyſon, as that it is any ſign of want of good breeding and gentile accompliſhments, to be wiſer and more ſober than the reſt of the World.

3. Laſtly, Men are tempted to comply with bad examples and follow the multitude, that they may avoid ſcoffs and reproaches, and not expoſe themſelves to the laughter and drollery of thoſe

thoſe who think every thing wit that is impudent or prophane. But this ſurely is ſo little and inconſiderable that it deſerves not to be named with the leaſt of thoſe inconveniences which attend a wicked life; for what hurt can it be to us to have thoſe ſpeak ill of us, whoſe very commendation and good word would be our greateſt ſcandal and reproach? and ſhall we to eſcape their irreligious ſcoffs and fooliſh jeſts, juſtly merit the reproof of all wiſe men, and make our ſelves liable to the cenſure of thoſe whoſe opinion and judgment alone ought to be regarded?

Were we but once throughly convinced of the truth and excellency of that Religion we are baptized into, how happy it would make us in this life, and what great things it aſſures us of in the future, no flouts nor railleries would any more be able to ſhake our purpoſes of good living, than they are to perſuade a rich man out of his eſtate and large poſſeſſions.

But farther, the beſt way to preſerve our reputation, even amongſt wicked men,

men, is to be true to thoſe principles which we have firſt eſpouſed; for let men ſay what they will, they have a ſecret reſpect and veneration for all thoſe whoſe goodneſs is exemplary and conſpicuous (which appears ſufficiently by their envying and ſnarling at them) and they inwardly ſcorn none more than thoſe whom they know to be guilty of thoſe vices which yet they themſelves tempted them to, and he that will be drunk himſelf will yet be ſure to laugh at another whom he ſees in that condition.

But let us ſuppoſe the worſt, what is it that they can ſay of us? onely that we are nice, and ſqueamiſh, and curious; that we have not yet learned to live at random, nor perfectly ſubdued our Conſciences; that we weigh and conſider our actions, and uſe our reaſons and underſtandings, and believe we were born into the World for ſome higher ends than pleaſing our ſenſes, and gratifying our appetites; that we are not indifferent to health and ſickneſs, peace and diſquiet, life and death; that we think there is ſomewhat in the World beſides what we daily ſee; that we provide for a State

which we may very ſoon enter upon, and trouble our ſelves with thoughts of what will become of us after we are dead, and the like: but if this be all, we ought to pray to God that we may conſtantly live under ſuch ignominy and die under the diſgrace.

To what I have already ſaid on this ſubject, I ſhall onely add, that if bad examples even againſt our reaſon and intereſt do ſo far prevail with Men to their utter undoing, what mighty power and influence would good examples have, enforced with all the arguments for and advantages of Religion? what an age of vertue, and quiet, and happineſs ſhould we enjoy, if Men of dignity and renown, of parts and underſtanding, of birth and fortune, would freely and conſpicuouſly offer themſelves to the World for patterns of life and converſation? thus they might entice others to be good, and ſoon retrieve the honour of our Religion, and bring it again into credit and repute. Were ſuch Mens lives as good and holy as their profeſſion is, ſinners would ſoon be put out of Countenance, and be aſhamed to appear in the World, their

their party would be made inconſiderable, and they would have but little power to draw others over to their ſide: for there is not a more winning and taking ſight in the World, than the life of a Chriſtian led exactly according to the preſcripts of his Religion. And were there not in all ages ſome ſuch perſons of authority and fame, whoſe zeal for Religion inſpires them with ſo much courage, as that they are neither aſhamed nor afraid of being honeſt and innocent, whatever the mad World may ſay or think of them for it (I ſay, were it not for ſuch) we ſhould ſoon loſe not onely the power but even the form of Godlineſs too. And God onely knows how many daily make ſhipwrack of their Conſciences, onely becauſe they have not ſpirit enough to endure to be out of the mode and faſhion.

II. But I haſten to the ſecond thing propounded, which was to ſhew how unreaſonable it is to be enticed to ſin, by ſuch as argue for it, and would endeavour to excuſe it, for there are many that are not altogether thus eaſie and complaiſant, as to follow merely for compa-

ny, nor ſo lazy as to take up every thing on truſt, but they are men of prudence and diſcretion, who deſire firſt to be ſatisfied whether what they are inticed to be prudent and ſafe; they like a wicked life well enough, could they be but furniſhed with ſome ſmall reaſons and arguments for it, by which they might juſtify their choice and ſtop the mouths of their Conſciences. I ſhall juſt mention theſe four ways whereby ſinners ordinarily entice ſuch as theſe to join with them, either 1. by repreſenting the pleaſures; or 2. by propounding the temporal advantages which attend ſin; or elſe 3. by ſpeaking ſlightly of the evil of it; or laſtly, by perſuading them that there is no danger in it.

1. Men entice others to ſin by propounding to them the pleaſures that are to be found in a looſe and wicked life. "They tell them that the laws of Reli-
"gion are fitted onely for the dull and
"Phlegmatick, unactive and Hypocon-
"driack, who grudge at others enjoying
"thoſe delights which themſelves are not
"capable of; that Nature deſigned we
"ſhould freely uſe whatever ſhe hath
"pro-

" provided for our entertainment here,
" and was not ſo unkind as perpetually
" to torment us with the ſight and pre-
" ſence of ſuch things as we are not per-
" mitted to taſte nor touch; that heaven
" indeed is the Lord's and he dwells
" there, and doeth what pleaſeth him
" beſt, but that the earth by his grant and
" permiſſion is ours, and who ſhall inter-
" rupt or diſturb us? that God hath left
" this lower World to us to take our pa-
" ſtime therein, and that that man makes
" the beſt uſe of it, who improves it moſt
" to ſerve his own pleaſures; that to live
" honeſtly, ſcrupulouſly and vertuouſly
" is to be buried whilſt we are alive;
" and that to order all our actions accor-
" ding to ſtinted rules and precepts, be-
" longs onely to ſlaves and thoſe who
" are of a ſervile diſpoſition; but what
" greater pleaſure, ſay they, than to be
" ungovernable and uncontrollable, to
" ſatisfy every appetite with its proper
" object, to deny our ſelves nothing that
" our luſts or paſſions crave, in every
" thing to gratifie our own humour and
" fancy, and to trouble our heads with
" nothing, unleſs it be to find out new
" delights and ſurprizing extravagancies?

But what are all theſe now other than the vain conceits of mad Men, who during their phrenzy do many times think themſelves the wiſeſt, greateſt and richeſt Men in the World, and take as much delight in ſuch idle dreams as others do in real enjoyments? but this pleaſure laſts no longer than till they recover the uſe of their underſtandings, and therefore in this caſe we are not to give credit to what wicked Men ſay, nor judge of the pleaſure and content of their lives by what outwardly appears. *Even in laughter the heart is ſorrowfull*, ſaith *Salomon*; and it is very poſſible for one who ſeems to ſpend all his days in mirth and jollity yet really to be in a very uneaſie condition all the while; which appears from this, that ſuch as are ſenſual and licentious find it beſt to keep themſelves in a continual hurry and heat, and as ſoon as they are tired with one ſin, preſently to betake themſelves to ſome other, for fear they ſhould unhappily light upon a Bible or a ſober thought: for this reaſon it is that they hate nothing ſo much as to be alone, and be forced to converſe with themſelves, and that if they chance to fall into any affliction or cala-

calamity they are the moſt dejected and diſconſolate perſons in the World; all theſe are certain ſigns that they are haunted with dreadfull and ghaſtly apprehenſions and jealouſies, which will ever and anon be crouding in, and ſometimes even when they are taking their fill of pleaſures.

But on the other ſide, Religion denies us no pleaſures which are manly and ſuitable to our natures, and forbids us onely ſuch exceſſes as in themſelves are both tedious and nauſeous; and layeth the foundation of that ſolid peace and joy, which no external thing whatever is able to ſhake or diſcompoſe.

In ſhort, if to be carried away with every vanity and whimſie, to be ſwayed by every unreaſonable humour and luſt, to be a ſlave to every Man's frolick and beck; to try the utmoſt ſtrength of our bodies, to run a courſe of all diſeaſes, to undergoe all reproach and infamy, to ſpend our eſtates and time in purſuit of ſhort life, rotten bones, and wretched poverty; if this be pleaſure, then for certain there is enough of it to be found in a diſſolute and vitious life.

2. With ſuch as are not altogether ſo fool-hardy, and but a little better huſbands of their health and eſtates, this kind of Philoſophy will not take at all, but if you would get them into a good opinion of wickedneſs, it muſt be by propounding to them ſome temporal advantage. Vertue or vice is very indifferent to ſuch, but what they can ſave or get moſt by, is always the beſt. Profit and gain do ſtrangely mollifie ſin, and take away much from the odiouſneſs and uglineſs of it; it ſhall be the moſt juſt and equitable thing in the World, if it can help us to raiſe a new family or recover one that is decayed; if it may ſerve to maintain our ſelves or relations, if by it we may oblige and obtain the favour of any great men, who will be ſo condeſcending as to admit us into a ſociety with them, though it be onely in their vices: for men are in the worſt inſtances ready to pleaſe and humour thoſe they hope to get ſomething from, or upon whom they depend.

But to this I ſhall reply nothing, but onely ask our Saviour's queſtion, *What ſhall*

*ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul, or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* If we ſell our integrity and hopes of future happineſs onely to get a little of this world, we make a fooliſh bargain. And I hope I need ſay no more in this place, ſince thoſe onely who are made of the baſeſt and courſeſt metal, and are of poor and degenerous ſpirits, are capable of being enſnared by this temptation.

3. Another way men have of enticing others to ſin is by aſſuring them, that there is no ſuch great evil in it as is commonly believed; "That when once we "have conquered our fear of ſinning, we "have ſeen the worſt of it; that the evil "of ſin lies moſt in a little ſcandal, that "is caſt upon it by ſome doting Philoſo-"phers, or melancholy Enthuſiaſts, or "ſome covetous Uſurers, who will not "be at the expence of it, or by thoſe "who receive tythes to declaim againſt "it; that the nature of good and evil "hath been always matter of diſpute, "and there is hardly any vice but what "hath been not onely approved but re-"warded by ſome whole Nation or o-"ther;

" ther; that at the beſt Religion is one-
" ly the politick contrivance of ſome
" wiſe Governours who knew how to
" manage and make advantage of the
" ſimplicity and credulity of ignorant
" people: but that all things are in their
" own natures indifferent.

Now is it not ſtrange that men ſhould ever be perſuaded, that it is as good to kill as to obey ones Parents? that we deſerve as much commendation when we repay kindneſſes with ill-will and injuries, as when we relieve thoſe that are in neceſſity? that cruelty, treachery and malice are as amiable in themſelves, and as innocent diſpoſitions, as mercifulneſs, fidelity and good nature? and why may we not as well believe that wiſedom is to be found onely in *Bedlam*, and that all that hath been ever ſpoken or done by men, hitherto counted in their wits, hath been indeed onely the effect of madneſs and diſtemper'd brains? though ſome politick men, for notable ends, have cunningly made common people for this great while to imagine quite otherwiſe. But I forbear.

4. And

4. And Laſtly; That which prevails moſt powerfully is to perſuade men that there is no great danger in ſin. "Some "ſins may indeed prove inconvenient, "but the pleaſure recompenſeth that; "ſome may be of ill report, but the pro- "fit will pay off that ſcore; and if ſin "ſhould chance to have any evil in it, "what's that to us when we are dead? "the onely fear is of an after-reckoning. And therefore do they who would fain ſin without controll, eſpecially labour that they may free themſelves and others from all ſuſpicions of a future ſtate; raking up every trifling objection that hath been of old uſed by any of the Atheiſtical Philoſophers, and hath been a thouſand times anſwered; and inventing new ones as far as their wit ſerves them. But if after all there ſtill remain any doubts concerning another life, then they plead how little we know or underſtand of it, or how abſurd it is to think that a man ſhall be for ever puniſhed for what he did by miſtake or ſurprize, or ſtrength of paſſion or height of bloud, or good nature or civility, or to ſave his life, or to maintain his reputation, family, or the like.

But

But will nothing convince men of the certainty of future puniſhments but their feeling of them? or do they think that God hath as little regard for thoſe Laws which he hath made, and by which he will govern and judge the world, as wicked men themſelves have? but ſhould we grant all that can be asked in this caſe, and ſuppoſe it very doubtfull whether our ſouls are immortal, (and ſurely no man will pretend to prove it impoſſible that they ſhould be ſo) nay ſhould we ſuppoſe it great odds that there is not a future ſtate; yet that man doth nevertheleſs moſt notoriouſly betray his want of prudence and diſcretion, who will not contradict his own brutiſh inclinations, and deny himſelf ſome ſhort pleaſures, and chuſe that courſe of life which our reaſon no leſs than our Religion doth recommend to us, rather than run the leaſt hazard (though it were of an hundred to one) of being for ever miſerable. And thus much concerning being enticed to wicked practices.

And now I might diſcourſe at large of another ſort of enticing, which is to erroneous

roneous and pernicious doctrines, and of ſuch as go about to inveigle and corrupt our judgments, and debauch our underſtandings by ſeducing us to the belief of opinions no leſs wicked than falſe; But I ſhall at preſent onely crave leave briefly to ſhew

1. What danger men are in of being ſeduced by ſuch temptations.

2. What is our beſt armour and ſecurity againſt them.

1. What danger we are in of being enticed from that profeſſion and belief which is publickly taught and own'd amongſt us: which danger ariſes partly from the earneſtneſs, importunity, or the arts that ſubtile men uſe to bring us off; but moſt eſpecially from the doctrines themſelves which they would learn us, and inſtill into us, which are ſuch as are moſt pleaſing and gratefull to one who delights in his ſins; ſuch as cannot but be moſt acceptable to him, as giving him hopes of heaven, though he deny himſelf very little for it; ſuch as lay the grounds and foundations of ſinning chearfully

fully without any fear or remorſe; and therefore as long as the greateſt part of the world love vice and eaſe, will ſucceed and be greedily entertained.

It is no hard matter to perſuade men to believe, what they before-hand wiſh were true; and there needs no great ſtore of proof or arguments to recommend thoſe opinions to the ſenſual and prophane, which give them leave to fulfill their luſts without any regret of conſcience or dread of puniſhment. Is it not a comfortable doctrine, and will it not be readily embraced by every reſolved ſinner, that after a long wicked life, at the laſt gaſp a bare ſorrow for ſin out of fear of hell, with the Prieſt's abſolution, ſhall at leaſt free him from eternal pains, and take away the guilt of his ſins, ſo that he need not be afraid of any thing beſides a ſudden death, which happens but ſeldom? When he is at any time diſturbed with the ſenſe of his dangerous condition, when the forced remembrance of his ſins doth gall and fret his mind, and fill him with fears and melancholy thoughts, what a relief muſt it needs be to him, to be aſſured that it is but going

to

to a Prieſt, and confeſſing his ſins, and undergoing ſome ſmall penances, and he is ſafe? for then he may go on in his full carriere with the greateſt ſecurity imaginable, then he may ſin with judgment, and commit all manner of wickedneſs with diſcretion.

He who hath no mind to part with his luſts is eaſily perſuaded that they are invincible; nor is it very difficult to make him, who is loth to take any pains or be at any trouble for keeping of Chriſt's commands, to believe that they are impoſſible to be kept, and that our Saviour fulfilled even his own law in our ſtead, and that we have nothing to doe but to believe that he hath done all and be thankfull.

In a word, where the obſcurity of Scripture, or the difficulty of the matter, or the weakneſs of our underſtandings have cauſed one to miſtake; multitudes have been drawn aſide to the moſt pernicious errours by their luſts and ſecular intereſts, and carnal deſigns, and love to gain, ſloth or ſenſuality, and by this chiefly are the ſeveral diſſenting parties

ties amongſt us maintained, and do encreaſe their numbers, to wit, by levelling the doctrine of Chriſtianity to mens corrupt inclinations and paſſions, whilſt we of the Church of *England* dare not be ſo falſe either to our own truſt or the ſouls of men, as to give them hopes of everlaſting bliſs on any other condition but that of living godlily, righteouſly and ſoberly in this preſent world; from all which follows,

2. That our ſecurity againſt ſuch temptations doth not conſiſt in much reading and great learning, in our skill in controverſies, or cunning in managing a diſpute, or ability of diſcerning between good argument and ſophiſtry, ſo much as in an honeſt mind and humble heart, an unfeigned deſire of knowing, and ſincere endeavour of doing the will of God. Him who is thus minded, God by his infinite goodneſs is ingaged not to ſuffer to fall into any errour of miſchievous effect; and as for other miſtakes wherein a good life is not concerned, God is ready to overlook and pardon what is the reſult onely of the imperfection of our preſent ſtate, beſides which,

honeſty

honeſty of mind, or love to vertue, is in it ſelf and its own nature our beſt preſervative againſt being infected with any bad opinions.

I am far from taking upon me to judge or condemn thoſe that were born and bred up, and have lived well under any forms of Religion different from what is eſtabliſhed amongſt us (for it is very poſſible for men to hold opinions very wicked, and yet not perceiving nor acknowledging the juſt conſequences of them to live very good lives) yet this is true, that one that deſigns nothing ſo much as pleaſing God and ſaving his ſoul, and is willing to take any pains for it, and hath no by-ends to ſerve, will not deſire to be excuſed from the mortification of his luſts, ſubduing his appetites, crucifying his fleſh, and from the ſeverities of an holy life, by ſubſtituting in the room of them pilgrimages, vain oblations, bodily auſterities, or ſuch formal devotions as very bad men may perform and be very bad ſtill. Thoſe principles which moſt advance the honour of God by laying the ſtricteſt obligations on men to all manner of goodneſs he

will hearken to and readily believe; but if they ſerve the ends of avarice or ambition, if they are apt to make men diſſolute or licentious, lazie or preſumptuous; this alone to ſuch an one will be reaſon ſufficient utterly to reject them, let them be propounded to him with never ſo much advantage or ſubtilty.

I ſhall conclude all with this, that did I know any *conſtituted Church* in the world, that did teach a Religion more holy and uſefull, that delivered doctrines in themſelves more reaſonable, or in their conſequences tending more directly to the peace of Societies and the good of every particular perſon, to the promoting of piety and true morality, and the diſcountenancing of ſin and vice; that did give more forcible arguments for the one and againſt the other; that did lay greater ſtreſs upon a pure mind and a blameleſs life, and leſs upon voluntary ſtrictneſſes and indifferent rites and ceremonies than we do, I would very ſoon be of that Church, and even entice all I could to it: but till ſuch an one can be found, nay ſo long as it is manifeſt that all the zealous oppoſers of the Church of *England* do hold opi-

opinions either deſtructive of or in their plain tendencies weakening the force of all the precepts, promiſes and threatnings contained in the Goſpel, and ſuch as if they do not encourage men to, yet at leaſt furniſh them with pleas and excuſes for their wickedneſs; I am ſure it is our intereſt no leſs than our duty, if we ſincerely love God and our ſouls, and have any real deſire of our own or others welfare, faithfully to adhere to that Church we have the happineſs to be members of, and vigorouſly to maintain and defend it.

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# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

## The Fourth Sermon.

ROM. XII. 16.

—*Be not wiſe in your own conceits.*

THERE is hardly any vice that men do ſo readily condemn in others, and yet ſo eaſily overlook and excuſe in themſelves, as this of ſelf-conceit, or a fond opinion of their own great wiſedom and underſtanding. None of us can endure that another ſhould aſſume to himſelf continually to preſcribe

to us, or uſurp ſo far upon us, as to be always impoſing on us his own private cuſtoms, humours or manners, as if we had no wit or judgment of our own whereby to govern and order our own affairs; and yet it is to be feared, moſt of us, who call this intolerable pride in another, are ſo deeply in love with our ſelves and our own ways, that we cannot forbear to cenſure and deſpiſe, to charge with folly and ignorance, all that do not believe and practiſe juſt as we our ſelves do: Every one thus in his own vain imagination preſuming himſelf wiſe and good enough to ſet a pattern and give law to all round about him.

It is the obſervation of the great *French* Philoſopher, *That the moſt equal diſtribution God hath made of any thing in this world is of judgment and underſtanding, becauſe every man is content with his own, and thinks he hath enough:* and though as to the outward gifts of nature or fortune he be willing to yield to others, yet he doubts not but he himſelf is as far removed from a fool, hath as large a ſhare of reaſon and diſcretion, is as able to manage himſelf and his own buſineſs

buſineſs as any other whatever. Whence it is that all men are apt ſo confidently to lean unto, and rely upon their own underſtandings, ſo peremptorily to truſt to and follow their own judgments, ſo reſolutely and inflexibly to adhere to their firſt choices and determinations, ſcorning and taking it in great ſnuff and dudgeon, to be taught, adviſed, check'd or controlled by any.

Now this is to be *wiſe in our own conceits*, againſt which the Apoſtle here in my *Text* cautions us; when any man hath a vaſt and undue opinion of his own powers and faculties, and thinks of himſelf above what is meet, when he will hearken to none other, nor believe any one but juſt himſelf; when he knows all things, does all things, is all things to himſelf, and within himſelf alone, not needing (at leaſt in his own big thoughts) any ones help, counſel or aſſiſtence; In ſhort, when he rates and values himſelf above his true worth, and deſpiſes others, and judges meanly of his Betters, then a man may be ſaid to be wiſe in his own conceit. Which ſelf-conceit undoubtedly lies at the bottom, and is the ori-

ginal cauſe of all Atheiſm and ſceptical diſputes againſt Providence and Religion, of all undutifull carriage towards governours and ſuperiours, and of all thoſe uncharitable ſeparations and unchriſtian diviſions that are ſo rife amongſt us, and do ſo ſadly threaten the ruine both of our Church and State.

Whereas on the other ſide, the great foundation of all true Religion and civil order, the onely effectual means of procuring and advancing peace, real wiſedom and truth amongſt men, is an humble and lowly eſteem of our ſelves, a modeſt diffidence of our own apprehenſions, an hearty and ſerious acknowledgment of our own defects, and a willingneſs to be inſtructed, directed, ruled and governed by others who are better and wiſer than our ſelves.

I ſhall at this time propound to you ſome plain inſtances, wherein this ſort of pride or ſelf-conceit doth ſhew it ſelf, particularly in matters of Religion, together with the folly and miſchiefs of it.

I. This

I. This ſelf-conceit ſhews it ſelf in being confident and poſitive about things which we do not underſtand, and in intermedling with affairs which do not belong to us.

II. In being obſtinate and pertinacious in ſome ſingular fancies and opinions, though upon never ſo ſlight grounds at firſt believed and entertained.

III. In affecting to impoſe our own humours and conceits upon others, and in deſpiſing and condemning all that are not in every thing juſt of our own mind and perſuaſion.

I. This ſelf-conceit appears in being confident and poſitive about things which we do not underſtand, and in intermedling with affairs which do not belong to us. When we reject every thing as falſe which we cannot preſently comprehend, and damn every thing, of which we cannot eaſily give a ſatisfactory account; when we *ſpeak evil of thoſe things which we know not*, as St. *Jude* ſays of ſome in his days; when nothing ſhall eſcape us which

which we do not ſtreight arraign and bring to the bar, nor any thing paſs with us for wiſe, good or decent, but what is exactly fitted to our own palate, and ſuited to our raw and unwary notions of things: when we meaſure and judge of the nature of God, the counſels of heaven, the methods of Providence, the conſtitutions of our governours, the doctrines of our approved teachers, the reaſonableneſs of publick laws, the deſigns and undertakings of other men, truth and falſhood, good and evil onely according to the agreement or diſagreement of things with our private fancies, childiſh prejudices and raſh judgments. But more particularly.

1. Hence it is that men are apt to quarrel with God and Religion, and endeavour either to diſpute or rally them out of the world. Into this one principle, I think, may be reſolved the moſt conſiderable, (if any ſuch there be) nay almoſt all the objections that ever were framed againſt the exiſtence of a God, and the truth and certainty of Religion, *viz.* that there are many things commonly taught and believed, which ſome pert young ſinners cannot by any means under-

underſtand, and therefore all of it muſt preſently be falſe.

They cannot poſſibly frame a notion of a ſpirit or immaterial ſubſtance. Every thing they think of is clothed with corporeal accidents; they cannot conceive an infinite Being, nor ſolve all the difficulties about eternity, omnipreſence, omniſcience, and the like; and therefore *the whole Idea of an inviſible power*, as one of the moſt conceited men in our Nation ſays, *is feigned onely by the mind, or imagined from tales publickly allowed of*. The Reſurrection ſeems a very unlikely and improbable ſtory. *How can theſe things be?* It is paſt their finding out why God did not ſend Chriſt ſooner into the world, if there be no ſalvation to be had without him. It ſeemeth to them very abſurd and unworthy that the Son of God ſhould appear here in ſo mean a condition, and dye ſo ſhamefull a death. They underſtand not the reaſon of ſome of God's Laws, and think they themſelves could make better. They conclude the parts of this viſible world might have been much more conveniently ordered and contrived than now they

they appear to be, if all were managed and conducted by an infinite power and wiſedom: and thus rather than in any caſe doubt or ſuſpect their own want of underſtanding, they turn Atheiſts or Scepticks, and renounce the moſt certain and plaineſt truths. God ſhall not be at all, unleſs he pleaſe to be and doe juſt as his creatures would have him. Theſe now are the perſons that conceit themſelves the onely men of parts and deep reach, who will not be born down by a popular faith, who ſearch and dive into the very bottom of things, and have alone happily ſmelt out that grand cheat and juggle with which the reſt of mankind hath been ſo long abuſed.

I know not one objection or doubt againſt the being of a Deity and Providence but what is thus raiſed onely by pride, and an arrogant opinion of our own underſtanding, as if nothing could be either true or reaſonable, but what is perfectly within our own ken and cogniſance. If ſuch conceited and haughty perſons cannot apprehend the uſefulneſs of any part of the creation; if any thing happens in the world that ſeems to them

them confuſed and diſordered, if their wiſedoms cannot diſcern the end, benefit and deſign of every thing that falls out, preſently they either charge God with folly and ill contrivance, or baniſh him out of the world, and impute all to blind fortune or inexorable deſtiny. Whereas indeed it is onely their own ignorance they ought to accuſe, and others may perchance comprehend what they cavil at; nay they themſelves may poſſibly arrive to the complete knowledge of that hereafter, which now ſeems ſo myſterious to them.

Let us but ſuppoſe God infinitely wiſer than we poor mortals are or can be, and that he may doe and order many things for good and great reaſons, which yet we who can ſee but a little way, and conſider but of a few things at once, are not able as yet to graſp or find out: Let us, I ſay, but ſuppoſe our underſtandings in this ſtate imperfect and limited, and capable of far greater improvement in another, and all theſe ſcruples of the Atheiſt preſently vaniſh into nothing. Thus you may obſerve with my Lord *Bacon* that no great proficients in Philoſophy who have really

really improved their minds and reaſons, have ever been Atheiſts; but ſuch onely as have had a little ſmattering of it, and being puft up with a ſmall pittance of knowledge, became preſently ready to conclude they underſtood all things; and being wiſe in their own conceits, did therefore huff againſt every thing they were not able to render a reaſon of. And if you conſult the experience of theſe days you will find thoſe onely to ſwagger and hector againſt Religion who have a lofty opinion of their own learning and parts, begot and maintained by a ſlight and ſuperficial skill in Philoſophy, by a little dabling in the Mathematicks and Mechanicks, and a ſmall ſhare of wit and drollery, enough to render themſelves the ſcorn and compaſſion of all truly wiſe and good men; but who art thou, O vain man, that thus exalteſt thy ſelf againſt God, and ſetteſt up thy puiſne wit and underſtanding in competition with his eternal reaſon?

'Tis ſtrange that when men find themſelves at a loſs, and utterly to ſeek about the nature of things viſible and ſenſible, about the ordinary appearances of this world,

world; when it is eaſie for a man but of little parts to raiſe ſuch a miſt about the plaineſt truths, and invent ſuch difficulties and objections as ſhall puzzle the ſageſt Philoſophers handſomly to ſolve and unriddle; when men do and muſt believe ſeveral things, the cauſes of which they can onely gueſs at, nor can ever be certain they are in the right; when a Loadſtone's drawing of iron, the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, the ſtriking fire out of a Flint, ſhall find mens wits employment enough, nor ſhall they ever be able perfectly to ſatisfy themſelves or others about them; when they are forced in ſuch things as they ſee daily before their eyes to confeſs their ignorance, and the uncertainty of all their reaſonings: that yet, I ſay, when they come to diſcourſe of ſuch things as are plainly above their reach and capacity, being inviſible and infinite, they will believe nothing but what they can fully comprehend, and count all that abſurd which they cannot ſatisfactorily explain. This is the firſt particular inſtance of that ſort of ſelf-conceit which conſiſts in medling with things we do not underſtand, nor do belong to us.

2. Then

2. Then alſo we meddle with things we do not underſtand, and which do not belong to us, when we take upon our ſelves to give peremptory accounts of God's providential dealings with the ſons of men, when without controll we paſs our raſh verdicts upon God's Actions, and ſit in judgment upon the various occurrences of this world, accuſing and arraigning God of arbitrary tyrannical government, if every thing happen not according to our minds, as we had beforehand wiſhed or projected; if thoſe we love much thrive not ſo well, or if our enemies proſper more, and grow greater in this world than we would have them; when we offer to preſcribe to Providence, and teach God how he ſhould rule the world, and diſpoſe of his favours. When we dare clamour and mutiny at God's proceedings, imagining that he hath not done well, or that we our ſelves could have done better; that if the Government of mankind were but committed to our care, (as the Chariot of the Sun is ſaid once to have been to *Phaethon*) we could order and determine things more wiſely and equally, and to better advantage. This

This is a moſt notorious piece of arrogance thus ſaucily to affix ſenſes and meanings on God's providences where he has given us no rule to judge by; and to interpret them according as our own intereſt, prejudice, paſſion, or ſome other vice doth ſway us; to bring arguments for any way or ſect from temporal ſucceſſes, or to condemn any who differ from us by reaſon of ſome calamities or unfortunate accidents that may have befallen them. This ſhews us mightily conceited of our ſelves and our own judgments, when we think God ſo fond of our private and ſingular ſentiments as that all his Providences muſt needs ſerve onely to vindicate and countenance our ſide, and diſparage thoſe that are contrary to us. This is buſily to pry into God's ſecrets, and it is the greateſt affront we can put upon him, thus unwarrantably to pronounce concerning his Actions, as if we were of his Cabinet-council, and had particular revelations of all the deſigns he carrieth on in the world. This is *to exerciſe our ſelves in great matters, and ſuch as are too high for us: for what man is he that can know the counſel of God?*

*or who can think what the will of the Lord is? for the thoughts of mortal men are miſerable, and our devices are but uncertain. And hardly do we gueſs aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in heaven who hath ſearched out? and God's counſel who hath known?*

3. Another inſtance of this ſort of ſelf-conceit may be in private and illiterate perſons pretending to expound the moſt difficult and obſcure places of Scripture, and to unfold and determine the moſt nice and curious queſtions in Theology. There is enough in holy Scripture plain and eaſie to employ the thoughts and lives of private Chriſtians, and yet it is too true that theſe parts of it, though they alone contain our neceſſary duty, are quite overlooked, at leaſt not near ſo much ſtudied or regarded, as thoſe that are moſt myſterious and dark: and thus even amongſt common people you will find not a few that are more poſitive and dogmatical in their interpretations of Prophecies, myſtical Speeches, and the Book of Revelations, than any ſober Divine

vine that hath made the Bible his ſtudy for many years. Whether this ariſeth from the encreaſe or decay of knowledge amongſt us, I ſhall not ſtand now to enquire, but ſo it is, that many a zealous Mechanick amongſt us ſets up for a judge of Orthodoxy; and having learnt a great deal of Scripture by rote and a few terms of art, ſhall dictate as magiſterially concerning the difficulteſt points in Divinity, as if he had ſate all his life long in the infallible Chair. And indeed I am apt to think this is peculiar to us in *England*, at leaſt that we are more notorious for it than thoſe who live in other Countries, and that not onely now in our days, but that we have been ſo in former times: for I find it amongſt the obſervations made by an *Italian* in Queen *Elizabeth*'s days, of glorious memory, that *the common people of England were wiſer, or at leaſt thought themſelves ſo, than the wiſeſt of other Nations: for that here the very women and ſhopkeepers were able to judge of predeſtination, free-will, perſeverance, and to demonſtrate the divine right of a Lay-elder, and were better able to raiſe and anſwer perplexed caſes of conſcience, than the moſt learned Colleges in other parts of*

*Europe*; and he concludes with this ſerious remark, *that thoſe perſons who were moſt buſie in diſputations and controverſies, and finding out the miſtakes of their governours and teachers had always the leaſt of humility, mortification or the power of godlineſs.* Of all the ſeveral kinds of fops that are, there is none more impertinent, troubleſome and juſtly ridiculous, than a gifted brother full of his viſions and illuminations, who can ſplit an hair, and ſmell out an hereſie I know not how far off, who *thinking that he knoweth all things knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* It is good advice therefore of the wiſe ſon of *Sirach*, *Be not curious in unneceſſary matters, for more things are ſhewed unto thee than men underſtand.*

4. This ſort of ſelf-conceit which conſiſts in medling with things we do not underſtand, or do not belong to us, appeareth in nothing more than in oppoſing our own prudence and diſcretion to the conſtitutions of our governours, and the determinations of our ſuperiours in matters relating to publick peace and order; and a great many ſuch there are who are never ſatisfied unleſs every thing be decreed

creed and appointed juſt as they themſelves think beſt and moſt fit. Hence they ſpend moſt of their time and diſcourſe in canvaſſing and deſcanting upon the actions of their ſuperiours, of which they are yet moſt incompetent judges; in taxing and inveighing againſt their proceeding, though never ſo far out of their ſphere and capacity; in finding fault with their conduct and picking quarrels with their orders and commands. What an happy world would there ſoon be, thinks ſuch a grave politician, if all things were ſettled according to that model, which he hath framed in his own conceit? how well would the State be ſecured, how quietly would the Church be governed, how decently would Divine Service be performed, how would all intereſts and parties be pleaſed, how ſoon would all fears and jealouſies vaniſh if he had but the management of affairs, or his counſel might be heard? how ſoon would there be a thorow reformation of all that is amiſs, would the King but pleaſe to think him worthy of ſuch a place of power and authority? In ſhort, let things be well or ill adminiſtred, ſtill, if his hand be not in it, he finds matter of diſlike and

complaint; or if it do chance that he hath nothing at all to object, yet he will give you a grave ſhrug or nodd, and ſhake his empty head, as if all were not well, and he knew ſome great matter which he durſt not utter. Alas! what an unhappy thing is it that ſuch a prodigious wiſe man ſhould be ſo little taken notice of or regarded? Thus every one almoſt conceited of his own politicks invades the office of a Counſellour of State, and acteth a Prince or Biſhop, and poſitively determineth what laws are fit to be repealed, what new ones to be made; what ceremonies in God's worſhip ought to be retained, what to be abrogated: and thus we confound and diſturb that order and ſubordination which God hath placed in the world, and render the Magiſtrate's office altogether uſeleſs, and as it were dethrone and depoſe thoſe whom God hath ſet over us. It is the office of our governours to take care of the publick peace and ſafety, and to make ſuch laws as ſhall ſeem to them moſt conducing thereto, which we are bound to ſubmit to, whether we judge them expedient or not; for if no laws or conſtitutions of our governours were to take place but onely

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ſuch as every one ſhould approve of, the authority of the Magiſtrate would ſignifie nothing, but every man would be his own lord and maſter, which would neceſſarily introduce the greateſt diſorder and confuſion.

5. And laſtly. Hence it is men are ſo buſie and pragmatical in intermedling and interpoſing in the concerns and private affairs of their neighbours, or any others they have the leaſt knowledge of, putting their ſickle into every man's corn, peeping into every man's houſe, liſtening at every ones window, to furniſh themſelves with matter for cenſure and obſervation, and by thus thruſting themſelves into every man's buſineſs, they uſurp undue authority, they aſſume without juſt title ſuperiority and juriſdiction over others, infringe their liberty, and implicitly charge them with weakneſs and incapacity to diſpatch their own affairs without their direction. The conceited man will not allow to others their ſhare of diſcretion, but monopolizes and engroſſes all wiſedom to himſelf, and if any thing happens well with others, it was he to be ſure that gave the firſt hint and

advice; but if things go otherwiſe than well, " why, the fool would not be go-
" verned, he may e'en thank himſelf for
" it, he would not hearken to good coun-
" ſel". Such an one is in at all things, is of all trades and profeſſions, underſtands all arts and ſciences, is fit to regulate all diſorders, make up all differences, carry on all intricate deſigns, able to conquer all difficulties and remove mountains; he is ready to undertake any thing, though never ſo much above his obſervation and experience; to him all ought to repair for ſatisfaction and direction; he ſpeaks nothing but oracles, and to his deciſions all ought to ſubmit, and perfectly to acquieſce in his judgment. But this ſhall ſuffice for this firſt ſort of ſelf-conceit, which conſiſts in medling with things we do not underſtand, or do not belong to us.

II. This conceit of our own wiſedom is ſhewn in being obſtinate and pertinacious in ſome ſingular fancies and opinions, though upon never ſuch ſlight grounds at firſt believed and entertained. There is none ſo apt to run into groſs miſtakes and abſurdities, nor yet ſo hard to

to be made ſenſible of them, as one that overvalues his own parts and wiſedom; for he hath not patience enough to conſider and examine any thing juſtly and throughly, he counts it a diſparagement in any caſe to ſuſpend and enquire, he underſtands all things at firſt ſight, and by inſtinct; and thus if he judgeth rightly, he hath good fortune, but if not, if he be in errour, it is impoſſible ever to convince or reclaim him; for he is impatient of all oppoſition, diſdains all counſel, cannot brook the leaſt contradiction, nor endure to be gainſayed; he ſcorns all inſtruction or rebuke, is galled to the quick, and takes it for an inſufferable affront if you yield not to him in every thing he ſays. It is as ſafe to give a man of honour the lie, as to diſpute what ſuch a dictatour affirms, you muſt receive all his grave and wiſe aphoriſms with a deep ſilence and profound reverence, or elſe you loſe his favour and friendſhip for ever. The proud man will teach all, learn of none, will not ſuffer any one beſides himſelf to have or uſe any underſtanding in his company, or to be able to doe or ſay any thing well; what hopes then of doing him any good, who ſwelled with

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an overweening eſteem of his own abilities, never ſo much as once dreams that it is poſſible he may be deceived? It is the ſaying of *Solomon*, Prov. 26. 12. *Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

I perſuade you not to deny or doubt of any truth which indeed you know, nor to be uncertain and wavering in your belief of any thing which by good argument and reaſon is made plain and evident unto you, but onely that you would not be too paſſionately confident of what you do believe, and that you would not be ſtiff and dogmatical about ſuch things as good and wiſe men have in all ages differed about. All I adviſe is, that we ſhould all of us throughly conſider our own ignorance, and the ſcantineſs of our faculties, and how eaſie it is for us to miſtake, and be very ready to diſtruſt our ſelves, and our own apprehenſions; that we ſhould bear a due regard and deference to the judgments of other men, and quietly hear and carefully attend to what is ſaid againſt any thing we do believe, as well as to thoſe who are of our own mind; that we ſhould be willing to be

be taught (and untaught too what for a long time we have held as certain) by thoſe who are better and have more underſtanding than our ſelves, eſpecially by thoſe whom God hath ſet over us, for that very end: that we ſhould weigh things without partiality or paſſion, and enquire out truth with the ſame indifference a Traveller doth his road, being concerned onely to find out the right way; and that we ſhould be ready at any time to change our opinion where we ſee good reaſon for it, and account it no ſhame to go over to the better ſide; for it is a fairer and nobler victory to vanquiſh an old inveterate prejudice or miſtake, than in wrangling diſpute to ſilence the moſt ſubtile adverſary. And in diſputable things, which are capable of oppoſition and reaſon on both ſides, for a man to confeſs his doubt, is a great teſtimony of a good judgment, and an excellent diſpoſition, and a preparative to ſound wiſedom; whereas to talk confidently and poſitively about ſuch things, hath been always given as the ſign of a fool and illiterate perſon, of a fiery and clamorous bigot, of an ill-manner'd and conceited zealot.

What

What I have ſaid of opinions may eaſily be applied to vices, where the caſe is the ſame, for it is this ſelf-conceit which hardens a man in all his ſins, and makes him deaf to all good inſtructions, whilſt he thinks ſo well of himſelf, that even his very defects he accounts beauties, and can excuſe, if not commend, his own deformities.

III. Laſtly, This conceit of our own wiſedom appears in affecting to impoſe our own humours and apprehenſions upon others, and in deſpiſing and condemning all that are not in every thing juſt of our mind and perſuaſion.

I have heard not a few complain of the impoſitions that our Laws Eccleſiaſtical do lay upon their tender conſciences; but yet give me leave to ſay I never met with any man that made this complaint, but who, notwithſtanding his diſlike of the preſent conſtitution (and there never was nor ever will be one that all men ſhall like) I ſoon found would be well pleaſed if his own way were ſetled inſtead of it, and laws made to oblige all others

to

to the practice and obſervance of what he in his own wiſedom thinks beſt and fitteſt. And though he doth not approve of what the Magiſtrate hath appointed or commanded, yet he would have the Magiſtrate and every one elſe approve of that, and that onely which he in his own conceit fanſies and commends.

And thus every one almoſt ſets up for himſelf, and would have a Church of his own framing, a Liturgy of his own inventing, and a Government of his own deviſing: and it is impoſſible for us to be ſatisfied as long as we will ſubmit to no Tribunal, nor ever be pleaſed unleſs every one be forced to believe and practiſe juſt as we our ſelves would have them.

That all men ſhould be of the ſame mind, and agree in the ſame conceptions and apprehenſions of things is impoſſible, and no more to be expected in this life, than that all mens faces and complexions ſhould be alike. As long as there are ſome places of Scripture hard to be underſtood, ſeveral things pertaining to Religion which are not fundamental, and therefore not plainly determin'd, but remain doubt-

doubtfull; as long as men have different educations, tempers, conſtitutions of body, inclinations of mind, and ſeveral intereſts to ſerve, as long as there are different degrees of knowledge and underſtanding in men; in a word, as long as ignorance and confidence continue in the world, ſo long there will be diſputes and controverſies about matters of Religion, even amongſt thoſe who yet agree in the ſame faith and profeſſion. Nor hath our Chriſtianity provided any infallible way or means of ſilencing or putting an end to ſuch differences about leſs matters and ſpeculative points.

We have indeed plainly propounded to us whatever is neceſſary for us to know or practiſe in order to ſalvation; and for the underſtanding of this, nothing elſe is requiſite but an honeſt mind and ſincere deſire of learning. As for other things which are not of ſo great moment, and are more obſcure, it is ſufficient that in all caſes we be modeſt and humble, teachable and governable, that we preſerve peace, order and charity, and I doubt not but God will pardon the errours of thoſe who are upright and well-minded.

minded. What horrible preſumption therefore is it in us to judge, deſpiſe, condemn our brethren, for thoſe miſtakes (if they be ſo) which God will overlook and paſs by? What deviliſh pride is this (I cannot ſpeak too earneſtly in the caſe) to endeavour like the old Tyrant, to ſtretch or cramp up every man to the proportion of my bed? to preſume that God will judge and count with men juſt by the rate and meaſure of my underſtanding, and damn every one that hath either more or leſs wit than I have, for either of theſe may be the occaſion of his differing from me. It is the greateſt oppreſſion and uſurpation imaginable to aſſault or try to overcome the reaſon of another by any thing elſe but reaſon: and this is the uncharitable ſpirit that ſo eminently diſcovers it ſelf in the *Roman* Church, which pretending to infallibility and an unerring authority over Chriſtians, condemns and perſecutes all who will not ſubmit to her determinations, and believe as ſhe doth. And with the ſame ſpirit many, that hate Popery enough, are too much leavened; I mean thoſe who appropriate the glorious names, of the godly, people of God, ortho-

orthodox Christians, onely to their own paltry Sect or Conventicle, and reprobate all that have not arrived to the same skill in their *Dutch Divinity* with themselves.

Many divisions and subdivisions there are now amongst us, and God onely knows when they will be at an end; but if you would know from whence they arise, it is easie to tell you in the words of *Solomon*, *onely of pride cometh contention*; or of St. *James*, *Whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your lusts?*

Self-conceit and self-love, whatever is pretended, is the great and principal root of all our religious quarrels and debates, whilst men too highly value their own private judgments in things doubtfull and indifferent, think meanly of the determinations of their superiours, and care not though they sacrifice peace and charity to the promoting of any trifling opinion they happen to be fond of.

I find it quoted as one of the Reverend *Hooker*'s ordinary sayings, that *the Scriptures*

*tures were not writ to beget diſputations and pride, and ſcruples and oppoſition to government, but charity, humility, moderation, obedience to authority, and peace to mankind; of which vertues* (as he always added) *no man ever repented himſelf at his death-bed.* And if ever unity and Chriſtian concord, and peace, and brotherly love be again recovered, and prevail again amongſt us, it muſt be by theſe means and principles.

It is a vain thing to think to bring all men to one mind, but yet one would hope it not impoſſible to perſuade Chriſtians to a mean opinion of themſelves, that *in lowlineſs of mind each ſhould eſteem others before himſelf*, to a dutifull ſubjection to their betters in things under their charge and ordering, and to a mutual forbearance and charity where they cannot preſently agree, and this would doe every whit as well as if we were all of one mind.

Several expedients have been propounded for the uniting us, and reconciling our differences; ſome are for toleration, others for comprehenſion, others for the

ſtrict execution of penal laws, but alas! neither theſe nor any other are likely to have any effect upon us till we learn humility and modeſty, till pride and ſelf-conceit, and all imperious affectation of impoſing our own ſingularities upon others be rooted out of the world, till we learn to ſubmit to our betters, and in indifferent things not to oppoſe our private opinions to the publick determinations of the Church. This one vertue of humility would go farther towards the putting an end to all our terms of diſtinction and unchriſtian Separations, than all the Writings or Diſputings, all the Laws and Proclamations about the Church have hitherto done. Whatever is the cauſe of the errour, pride is always the cauſe of the quarrel that makes the breach and forms the party.

Let but all amongſt us agree together in common to mortify our pride and arrogance, and conceited eſteem of our ſelves, and baſe contempt of others, and the ſimple truth will prevail in the world, or at leaſt there will be no more of theſe unchriſtian Separations and Schiſms, but peace and unity will be eſtabliſhed and ſecured amongſt us.

To

To ſum up all I have ſaid. *Be not wiſe in your own conceits.* Affect not things above your skill and reach. Meddle not with what is beyond your capacity, or out of your ſphere; ſmall abilities and great confidence ordinarily make the moſt inconſiderable and ridiculous creature in nature.

Think it no diminution in ſome things to confeſs your ignorance, in all weighty buſineſs to ask for counſel and advice: truſt not too much to your own judgments and diſcretions.

Think that your Governours and Teachers may be wiſer, and know better what is for the publick good, and what is fit and decent than you can poſſibly do. Give other men leave to underſtand as well as you, and make not your ſelves the ſtandard of wiſedom, nor take upon your ſelves to bear down all mankind, or to command in all companies, nor expect that every one ſhould yield to your humours, and deny their own inclinations that they may gratify yours.

Do not pertinaciouſly purſue any thing wherein you are ſingular, examine all things, even thoſe things you may have long believed to be true, with diffidence of your ſelves, and ſuſpicion of your own judgments: hear calmly, debate ſoberly and rationally, and allow other men their turn to ſpeak, and attend to what is ſaid againſt you with as eager a deſire of learning, as you do to what is diſcourſed on your own behalf.

Think how often formerly you have been deceived, and been forced to retract your errour; and that when you grow older, and get greater experience, you may chance alſo again in many things to change your mind. Be not apt to think meanly of, or ſeverely cenſure, or ſuperciliouſly diſdain thoſe that differ from you. *Woe unto them*, ſaith the *Prophet*, *that are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight.* There is nothing more odious and diſtaſtfull to God or men, than the imperious domineering and inſulting ſpirit and temper of the ſelf-conceited; nor yet any greater ſport and diverſion to his company than his grave looks,

looks, his formal ſtiff carriage, his ſtarched ſet diſcourſe, his lofty pretences, his cunning conjectures, his *Utopian* projects, his ſly and crafty commendations of himſelf, his wiſe remarks upon all things and perſons; and thus the fool empty of all true worth, and full of himſelf, ſtruts and ſwells and admires himſelf, but is laughed at by every body elſe.

What on the other ſide is more gracefull and amiable, more lovely and charming, than humility and modeſty, a mean eſtimation of our ſelves, and a willingneſs to yield and condeſcend to others? It renders us no leſs acceptable to men than to God; it hath a ſingular obligingneſs and agreeableneſs in it ſelf, though we have nothing elſe to give us advantage.

To conclude all: when we had rather obey than rule, follow than lead; when we diſdain not to learn of the meaneſt, deſpiſe no body beſides our ſelves, do not think it reaſonable to magnify our ſelves above other men, but ſet a juſt value upon thoſe abilities they are endewed with,

in honour preferring others before our ſelves: When every one thus minds and contents himſelf with his own buſineſs and the offices of his particular calling, contains himſelf in that rank God Almighty hath placed him in, ſtudies to act his own part well and to the life, and is moſt buſie in mending himſelf; Then, and not till then, will the times mend, and we may expect God's bleſſing upon us. But when every common Souldier thinks he can order things better than his Captain, and leaves his own ſtation to direct his Officer, and every Captain neglects his own Company to teach and inſtruct the Commander, what can follow but mutiny and diſorder, if not utter confuſion? *Be not wiſe in your own conceits.*

The

# The Fifth Sermon.

S. MATTH. XV. 19.

*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts—.*

AS it is God alone that knows the thoughts of man, ſo his commands alone directly reach to them, and no little part of Religion conſiſts in the due government of them; whence it is commonly laid down as a rule of interpreting any of God's laws, that though onely the outward action be expreſly commanded or forbidden, yet it muſt be extended to the inward thoughts, affections and diſpoſitions of our minds; and he that appears very innocent and unblameable as to his words and actions, may yet really in the ſight of God, and a true account of things, ſtand guilty of the greateſt wickedneſs by reaſon onely of his impure, malitious, or otherwiſe evil thoughts.

Thoughts indeed are free from the dominion or power of men, we may conceal or diſguiſe them from all the world, we may deceive the moſt cunning and ſubtile, by ſpeaking and acting contrary to our minds; by pretending what we never mean, by promiſing what we never intend; and if we betray not our ſelves no man can find us out, and we ought to judge one of another onely by what is viſible and notorious: but yet our thoughts are abſolutely ſubject to God's authority, are under his juriſdiction who is omniſcient, who knoweth them afar off; who ſeeth not as man ſeeth, nor judgeth as man judgeth; for *the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins*, diſcerneth the moſt hidden workings and inward motions of our ſouls, is conſcious to all the wandrings of our fancies and imaginations, is acquainted with all our private deſigns and contrivances, and knoweth our ſecret ends and intentions, ſo that in reſpect of the divine laws and judgment, our very thoughts are as capable of being really good or really evil as our actions.

Now

Now *thoughts* here I underſtand in the largeſt ſenſe, as comprehending all the internal acts of the mind of man, *viz.* not onely ſimple conceits, apprehenſions, fancies, bare pondring or muſing of any thing in our minds, but alſo all the reaſonings, conſultations, purpoſes, reſolutions, deſigns, contrivances, deſires and cares of our minds as oppoſed to our external words and actions. Whatever is tranſacted wholly within our ſelves, of which none are conſcious but God and our own ſouls, I underſtand here by thoughts.

But then by evil thoughts I do not mean the bare thinking of any thing that is evil, or the apprehending or conſidering what is ſinfull; for this of it ſelf doth no more pollute or defile our ſouls, than ſeeing a loathſome ugly ſight doth hurt the eye.

The Prophet indeed tells us *that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil*, and *that he cannot look on iniquity*, that is, not with the leaſt degree of complacence or approbation; he cannot endure it, nor will

will he always bear it; but yet for all this, God ſeeth all the ſins that are committed in the world; *for he beholdeth miſchief and ſpite to requite it with his hand*, as *David* tells us *Pſal.* 20. 14. and it is neceſſary when he forbids it, puniſheth it, or pardons it, that ſin muſt then be the object of the divine underſtanding in all thoſe acts that are converſant about it. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.*

Thus our bleſſed Saviour, though he was free from all ſin, yet when he was tempted by the Devil, no doubt had in his mind the apprehenſion of that evil he was inſtigated to by that wicked ſpirit; it was all at that inſtant repreſented to his thoughts; but ſince his will did not in the leaſt comply with or incline towards it, ſince the motion was rejected with infinite abhorrence and diſlike, he contracted not the leaſt guilt thereby.

A bad man may often think of what is good, may entertain his mind with ſpeculations about God, his immortal ſoul, a future life, the benefits purchaſed for us by Jeſus Chriſt; may employ himſelf

ſelf much in the ſtudy and meditation of the Scriptures, divine and ſpiritual things, onely to exerciſe his wit, to ſatisfie his curioſity or inquiſitive humour, to furniſh himſelf for talk or diſpute, to appear learned, or the like; nay he may take great pleaſure in thinking of ſuch objects, and in uſing his reaſon, judgment, invention or fancy about them, as other men are delighted in the ſtudy of any other ſciences or in any acquired knowledge. Yet all theſe thoughts about good things are not, in a moral reckoning, good thoughts, nor is the man at all morally the better for them, if his will do not join with nor is governed by them. If he be not pleaſed with, if he doth not entertain ſuch thoughts upon ſome other accounts, there is no more Religion or vertue in fixing his mind upon God, than there is in thinking of the Sun, or Moon, or Stars, or any propoſition in the Mathematicks, or any other innocent thing or notion; for thus an atheiſt may conſider much God's nature, and attributes, and providence, onely to pick a quarrel with him, or find out ſomething to object againſt them.

And

And on the other ſide the beſt men may, and ſometimes muſt, think of thoſe things that are ſinfull, how elſe ſhould they ever repent of them, beg God's pardon for, or reſolve againſt them? there is no reading in the holy Scriptures or any other hiſtories, wherein the evil actions and ſpeeches of wicked men are recorded, there is no living or converſing in the world, where ſo much evil is every day committed, without thinking of that which is ſinfull; but then in good men the thought of any ſuch thing is always with grief and deteſtation, they think of it as of a thing that is moſt hateſull and pernicious to them; as men think of a plague or miſchance, ſhivering at the very naming of it, and praying to God to preſerve them from it. Thus our thoughts are not to be called or counted evil onely from the object of them.

Nor yet farther by evil thoughts do I underſtand any ſudden thoughts, ſtarting up in our minds before we are aware, which will not I believe be imputed to us as ſins, though if conſented to, they are undoubtedly

undoubtedly evil; for nothing will be reckoned to us as a ſin, or puniſhed as ſuch, but what is ſome way or other voluntary, and might have been helped or avoided. Now ſuch firſt motions of ſin (as we commonly call them) which come upon us, *nobis non ſcientibus nec volentibus*, without our knowledge and againſt our wills, are onely the exerciſe of our vertues when preſently checked and contradicted; but when conſented to and delighted in, they then bring forth ſin, and ſin when it is finiſhed brings forth death.

But to be more particular, I ſhall firſt of all ſhew you when our thoughts may be counted voluntary, and we are truly and juſtly anſwerable for them. Secondly, propound to you ſome of the ſeveral kinds of evil thoughts. Thirdly, lay down ſome practical rules for the due government of our thoughts.

I. I ſhall ſhew when we are juſtly anſwerable for our thoughts, or when they may be reckoned voluntary; and here I ſhall onely give theſe three inſtances.

1. When

1. When evil thoughts are plainly occaſioned by any thing that was voluntary in us, then they are to be accounted voluntary and ſinfull. What our thoughts ſhall be depends very much upon the choice of the outward objects that we converſe moſt with in the world, and they will be oftneſt on thoſe things which we delight moſt in, and accuſtome our ſelves moſt unto. So far forth therefore as our company, diſcourſe, employments, entertainments, books, recreations, wine, nay I may add diet too do contribute to the ſtirring up in our minds, wanton and luſtfull, covetous or ambitious, angry or revengefull thoughts, ſo far are ſuch thoughts voluntary in us, and though they may come upon us, and ariſe in our minds without any actual conſent or command of our wills, yet we are juſtly anſwerable for them, as having by ſome wilfull act of our own diſpoſed our ſelves for ſuch thoughts.

By ſenſuality, and looſeneſs, and intemperance, and indulging themſelves in bodily pleaſures, men may ſo debaſe their minds, that hardly any thoughts ſhall offer

offer themſelves, but what are beaſtly and lewd, or at beſt trifling and uſeleſs. Empty, light, vain, fooliſh, extravagant thoughts, are the natural product of idleneſs, ſloth, pride and luxury. So that, though what we ſhall think of be not at all times in our power, yet it is in our power in a very great meaſure to abſtain from thoſe things which are apt to incite evil thoughts, and miniſter fewel to them; from all incentives or provocations to inordinate or filthy imaginations. And as far as we our ſelves give occaſion to the raiſing up of evil thoughts in our minds, ſo far are they voluntary and imputable to us.

2. When evil thoughts proceed from groſs ſupine negligence and careleſneſs, then are we accountable for them: when we keep no guard at all over our minds and fancies, but give them free liberty wildly to rove and ramble; and let what will come into our thoughts; if they then prove vile and wicked, it is very much our own fault, and we muſt anſwer for them, becauſe we then willingly proſtitute our minds to every luſt and vanity. And when we ſet the doors wide open without

out any watch or guard, we muſt blame our ſelves if diſhoneſt men enter in ſometimes as well as good friends.

Indeed, notwithſtanding all our care to ſecure our ſelves, thieves may perchance break in upon us, or creep in unawares; whilſt we ſleep or intermit our watch, (for we cannot be always upon the guard) the enemy may ſow ſome tares, inject and dart in ſome evil thoughts. Though we keep never ſo ſtrict an eye over our ſelves, and endeavour to the utmoſt to keep our ſouls pure and chaſt, yet ſometimes by ſurprize, through caſual non-attendance and inadvertency, or the cunning and activity of our ſpiritual enemies, a baſe wicked thought may ſuddenly poſſeſs our minds, nay and abide in us for ſome time before we take notice of it; but then the mind is moſtly paſſive in this; it is raviſhed rather than voluntarily commits lewdneſs: this is our weakneſs and infirmity onely, which God is always ready to pity and pardon.

Our ſouls are active and buſie, they ceaſe to be and exiſt, when they do not think

think of ſomething or other. Now if we do not take care to furniſh our minds continually with good and uſefull matter for our thoughts, they will ſoon find out ſomething elſe to exerciſe themſelves upon; and when we let them run looſely and at random, and think at all adventures as it happens, we then tempt the Devil to chuſe a ſubject for us, we expoſe our ſelves to the wildneſs and extravagance of our own vain imaginations; and when we keep no watch, no wonder though we be overrun with ſwarms of vagrant thoughts. When therefore our evil thoughts ariſe from groſs neglect and careleſneſs, they then may be accounted voluntary, and charged on us as ſins.

3. Though evil thoughts may be involuntary at the firſt ſtarting of them, being occaſioned by what we could not avoid hearing or ſeeing, or coming upon us unawares, or proceeding from the temper and habit of our bodies, or the accidental impulſes and motions of the animal ſpirits in our brains, which are the moſt immediate inſtruments the ſoul uſes in her operations; though thus the

firſt riſe of evil thoughts may be involuntary, yet if we with pleaſure entertain and cheriſh them, if our fancies are tickled by them, if they are delightfull and gratefull to us, this implies the conſent of our wills, and they then become greatly ſinfull in us.

Though we did not at firſt willingly conjure up theſe evil ſpirits, yet if we like their company, and bid them welcome, and provide lodging for them, that they may continue with us, this comes well-nigh to the ſame as if we had at firſt invited them in. Nay when ſuch enemies have invaded our minds, if we do not preſently raiſe all the forces we can againſt them, put a ſudden check and ſtop to them, labour with all our power to quell and root them out, we are reaſonably preſumed to be of their party, and to join with them. My meaning is plainly this, that though evil thoughts at firſt enter without our leave and conſent, yet if afterwards we knowingly indulge them, nay if we do not ſtreight upon our reflexion upon them reject them with utter hatred and indignation, and by all means ſtrive to divert our thoughts to more innocent objects,

objects, we then ſtand truly guilty of the evil and malice of them: which ſome have uſed to expreſs thus; that *though we cannot hinder the birds from flying over our heads, ye we may prevent their making of neſts in our hair.*

The ſum of all I have ſaid is this: That evil thoughts are no farther ſinfull in us, than they are voluntary, or than they may be helped and avoided: whenever therefore we give manifeſt occaſion to them by allowing our ſelves in ſuch practices as are apt to incite evil thoughts, or when we do not before-hand duely watch againſt them; or when, if they do at any time ariſe in our minds, we fail to ſtifle and cruſh them as ſoon, and as far as we are able, then they are reckoned to us as ſins, and are to be repented of as well as actual tranſgreſſions.

II. Having thus briefly ſhewn you when we are in fault and to be blamed if our thoughts be evil, I proceed now ſecondly to give ſome account of the nature and kinds of evil thoughts. And here you muſt not expect that I ſhould give you a particular enumeration of the

ſeveral ſorts of them, for that would be an impoſſible thing; *Who can tell how oft he offendeth?* who can declare all the ſeveral thoughts that come into a man's mind but in one day or one hour, which yet he would bluſh to have made known to thoſe he converſes with? Our thoughts are very quick and ſudden, nimble and volatile, can wander in a moment to the utmoſt ends of the earth, can leap ſtreight from one pole to the other, are as various as the ſeveral objects of our ſenſes, and the infinitely different ways whereby they may be diſpoſed, united or blended together. And if we ſhould be at a loſs for external objects to think of, the mind can eaſily frame objects to it ſelf, and a thouſand frenzies and extravagances, and mad whimſies and giddy conceits are the monſtrous iſſues of mens brains. I ſhall therefore onely give ſome few inſtances of thoughts undoubtedly evil and ſinfull. Such are

1. Which I ſhall inſiſt moſt upon, the repreſenting and acting over ſins in our minds and thoughts: when we erect a ſtage in our fancies, and on it with ſtrange complacence imagine thoſe ſatiſfactions

factions and filthineſſes which yet we dare not, which we have not opportunity to bring into outward act. This is by ſome called *ſpeculative wickedneſs*, *the dreams of men awake.* When we gratify our covetous impure deſires and luſts with the pictures and feigned repreſentation of thoſe enjoyments and pleaſures and ſenſual contentments we have a mind to. Now ſuch kind of thoughts may be conſidered with reſpect to the time preſent, paſt or to come.

(1.) If we conſider theſe lewd imaginations as to the preſent time, there is no ſin or wickedneſs ſo vile and heinous but a man may become truly guilty of it in the ſight of God onely by imagining it done in his mind, and taking pleaſure in ſuch a thought. Thus the revengefull perſon who perhaps hath hardly heart and courage ſo much as to handle his ſword, or to look his enemy in the face, yet in his thoughts can fight him and ſubdue him, imagine him under his power, lying at his mercy, and exerciſe all manner of ſpite and cruelty towards him, put him to extreme pain and miſery, fanſie him undone and ruin'd, and

then rejoice in his own mind, that he is thus even with him; and by this means may become guilty of the ſins of murther and revenge, though he hath not done his enemy the leaſt miſchief all this while.

Thus again, modeſty, ſhame, fear of diſcredit, or ſome other temporal conſideration may prevail with a man ſo far, as that he ſhall never attempt a woman's chaſtity; but yet if in his thoughts he fanſies her preſent with him, and embraces that image of her which is painted in his mind with a phantaſtick love; if the devil of luſt be ſtirred up in him, and he enjoys the cloud, the creature of his own brain, this is the adultery of the heart, our mind then becomes a ſtews, and is polluted and defiled; and though the actual ſin be a ſign of greater impudence and more untamed luſt, yet this argues the ſame kind of wickedneſs and uncleanneſs. And this was the Doctrine of the *Philoſophers* of old: *fecit quiſque, quantum voluit:* every one may well be ſuppoſed to have done that which he wanted not will or mind to, but onely opportunity of doing. So *Seneca*, *Iatro eſt*

*eſt etiam antequam manus inquinet.* He is a thief that covets, though he never rifles another man's goods, if in his imagination onely he poſſeſſes them; nay a man may thus contract the guilt of greater and more ſins, than ever he can poſſibly act. It is but a very little in reality that the moſt griping ravenous oppreſſour can graſp to himſelf, or defraud other men of, but in his thoughts he may ſwallow Empires, and plunder whole Towns and Cities. Thus a man, even whilſt in this place, may ſtab another, though in *Turkey*, he may raviſh every beautifull woman he ſees, rob every man he meets with, and in the twinckling of an eye (like *Caligula*) murther whole Societies and Kingdoms.

For this I take for an undoubted truth, that they who allow themſelves in evil thoughts and imaginations, who give way to their ambitious, covetous, or luſtfull fancies, are not reſtrained by the fear of God from the actual commiſſion of thoſe ſins they love to think of; it is ſome other bye conſideration, ſome temporal reſpect that hinders them, not the ſenſe of their duty and Religion: and this

I believe every one that faithfully examines his own mind will yield, that if he could as freely, and as safely and secretly commit any sin, as he can think of it with pleasure and delight, he should not stick, as often as he had any inclination or temptation thereto, to doe all those things he thinks of with so much joy. Could the angry revengefull person, whose mind boils and ferments with inward spleen and rage, by a wish or thought, with as little danger, and as secure from all knowledge of other men, or the least suspicion of being found out, kill or wound or mischief his enemy, as he can desire it in his mind, do you believe he would spare any of his adversaries? could the greedy wretch as secretly get the possession of his neighbour's goods, as he can covet them, could he actually cheat and overreach, and it were no more possible for him to be discover'd, than it is for men to know his thoughts, I doubt not but every such person would soon actually invade and usurp all those things he now swallows in his imagination or greedy appetite onely. But farther;

(2.) As

(2.) As to what is paſt, there is reciting and repeating over thoſe ſins in our thoughts and fancies, which we had long before committed, and perhaps, as to the external acts, quite forſaken. When we revive our ſtollen unlawfull pleaſures in our memories, and run over in our minds all the paſſages and circumſtances of our ſins long ſince committed, with a new and freſh delight; this is much the ſame as if we lived continually in them. As men often think of their dead friends, and repreſent to themſelves their features, their converſations, and divert themſelves with the remembrance of that pleaſure they once enjoyed in their good diſcourſe and company, though they have lain many years rotting in their graves: or as good men with mighty ſatisfaction reflect upon the actions of a well-ſpent life, recalling to their minds with great joy and tranſport, what at any time they have well done, after the ſame manner do wicked men as it were raiſe again by the witchcraft of their filthy imaginations, their paſt ſins, renew their acquaintance with them, and approbation of them. When weak and impotent, diſabled by poverty,

poverty, age, want of convenience or opportunity for the repeated commiſſion of them, they poſſeſs the ſins of their youth, and place them ever before them, chewing upon the cud, recounting over to themſelves their merry bouts, their mad pranks, their wanton dalliances, their lewd exceſſes, their wicked company, with the ſame contentment almoſt as they firſt acted or enjoyed them: and thus their ſouls ſin ſtill as much as ever, although yet as to the outward act they may be through age, poverty, want of ability or opportunity, chaſt, temperate and ſober. This is certain, we cannot be truly ſaid to have forſaken or repented of thoſe ſins, the remembrance of which is gratefull to us. To think of our evil ways with grief and ſhame, and to abhor them, is our duty; but to reliſh them in our thoughts is ſtill to approve of them, it is a ſure ſign that we have not really diſowned or renounced the ſin in our judgments, though we may have left it for ſome accidental reaſon, and that we are ſtill very good friends with it, if we can allow our ſelves to think of it with pleaſure and delight.

(3.) If

(3.) If we conſider evil thoughts with reſpect to the time to come; the ſpeculative wickedneſs of mens fancies and imaginations ſhews it ſelf in the wild and extravagant ſuppoſitions they make to themſelves, feigning themſelves to be what they would fain be, and then imagining in their minds what in ſuch circumſtances they would doe, how they would manage and demean themſelves. God onely knows how much time men fool away in ſuch childiſh conceits, of becoming, God knows when, great and rich and honourable; and how bravely they would then live, how they would pleaſe every appetite and humour, fulfill every deſire, have their will in all things, and enjoy perfect eaſe and content. Now this is the work of a mean idle fancy, when we thus frame to our ſelves imaginary models of happineſs, creating fools paradiſes to our ſelves, building caſtles in the air, and then vainly ſtruting up and down, and ſporting our ſelves in them. What preferments and advancements, what ſucceſs and proſperous fortune do ſome men, eſpecially young men that know but little in the world, promiſe to them-

themſelves? what jolly thoughts do ſuch falſe Romantick hopes often fill them with, how do they make their ſpirits leap and caper within them, as if the meſſenger were juſt now at the door to bring them tidings of it? how do their thoughts go out to meet that pleaſure and happineſs they ſo much deſire? how do they pleaſe themſelves with the fancies of thoſe mountains of gold, with thoſe ſtrange chimerical Idea's of bliſs which yet they are never like to be poſſeſſed of? like thoſe Good-fellows the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks of, *Iſa.* 56.12. *Come ye, ſay they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill our ſelves with ſtrong drink, and to morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant:* they feed and live upon the promiſes of their own hearts and thoughts before-hand, and as one hath well expreſſed this vanity, *they take up before-hand in their thoughts upon truſt the pleaſures they hope to enjoy, as ſpend-thrifts do their rents, or heirs their revenues before they come of full age to enjoy them.*

Very few men are ſatisfied with their preſent allotments, or like their preſent fortune, and therefore they ſet their imaginations

ginations on work to mend it; and pleaſe and gratify themſelves with theſe ſilly impoſtures of their teeming fancies. "Well, "ſays the impatient youth, when my "Parents are once dead and gone to hea- "ven, and my time of being ſubject to "Maſters, Tutours and Guardians ſhall "be once happily expired, and I ſhall be "free from the reſtraint of the grave and "wiſe, how brisk and frolickſome ſhall "I then be? how merry will the days be, "how ſhort the nights, when I ſhall ſin "without fear of an angry look, or a "ſevere check, pleaſe onely my ſelf, give "no account to any? Thus his heart and mind is debauched long before his body is entred: and ſo the admirer of honour and worldly dignity cuts out for himſelf that place at Court, or that office which he affects moſt, and then ſettles himſelf in all the magnificence and pomp imaginable, fanſying himſelf highly raiſed and exalted above other men; all his neighbours and former acquaintance crowding to attend and wait on his pleaſure, and all their *ſheaves bowing down to his ſheaf*, as *Joſeph* dreamt, *and the ſun, moon and ſtars making their humble obeyſance to him.* Theſe are the firſt ſort of evil thoughts, lewd or wicked,

wicked, or trifling and uſeleſs imaginations. I ſhall but juſt mention ſome other, as

2. Unworthy, Atheiſtical, prophane, deſperate thoughts of God Almighty, *ſaying in our hearts there is no God*, either ſecretly denying there is any, or too often wiſhing there were none: queſtioning his power and goodneſs, diſtruſting his truth or faithfulneſs: *How ſhould God know? or is there knowledge in the moſt high? can he judge through the dark cloud?* bidding him *depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of his ways. What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him?* and *what profit ſhould we have, if we pray to him?* what can he doe for us to recompence the trouble of his ſervice? *what advantage will it be to me, if I be cleanſed from my ſin?* "Here is a deal of doe and buſtle "made about Conſcience and Religion, I "will e'en venture my ſelf as I ſee a thou- "ſand others do; I ſhall ſcape as well as "the reſt of my company or acquain- "tance, and the like. God onely knows how many of us ſuffer ſuch vile thoughts as theſe to lodge in our breaſts.

3. I

3. I might inſtance in our thinking and muſing upon things innocent and harmleſs enough in themſelves, which yet become evil becauſe of the ſeaſons of them, that is, becauſe we ſhould then be thinking of better things; for it is certainly lawfull to think of our friends, relations, temporal concerns, but then it muſt be in due time and place: they muſt not juſtle out all other thoughts; nay we muſt wholly baniſh them our minds when we come into God's more eſpecial preſence; at our prayers, or at receiving of the Sacrament, ſuch thoughts are by no means to be admitted. I ſpeak not now of the ſudden excurſions of our thoughts, even when the mind is about the moſt ſerious employments, nor of the greater unrulineſs of our thoughts, upon ſome particular accidents or occaſions. I mean onely our groſs heedleſneſs in ſuffering them to wander to the ends of the earth, whilſt in pretence and ſhew we are engaged in worſhipping that God, *who is a ſpirit, and will be worſhipped in ſpirit and truth.* What man that now hears me would be content that all the ſeveral things not onely that have ſuddenly

denly come into his mind, but which he hath voluntarily for a conſiderable time dwelt upon and entertained his mind with during this ſhort exerciſe, ſhould be here openly expoſed to the whole Congregation? How many of us have been telling our money, or counting over our bags, or ſelling or buying in our ſhops, or at our games and ſports, or ordering our houſhold affairs, or converſing with diſtant friends? into how many Countries have ſome of us travelled? how many perſons have we viſited? how many ſeveral affairs have we diſpatched, to ſay no worſe, ſince we firſt this day began Divine Service?

4 I might farther mention envious, malitious, fretting thoughts, when our ſpirits are diſquieted and vexed at the proſperity and happineſs of other men, who get the ſtart of us, and are preferred before us, becauſe they have a greater trade, or are better loved and more reſpected than our ſelves. Or

5. Troubleſome anxious thoughts of future events, multiplying to our ſelves endleſs fears and ſolicitudes, diſtracting our

our minds with uſeleſs unneceſſary cares for the things of this life, perplexing our ſelves about things that do not at all concern us, nor belong to us. How many who want nothing they can reaſonably deſire, render their lives ſtrangely wretched and miſerable, onely by diſcontented and melancholy thoughts, and ill-boding apprehenſions? their ſouls continually ſhaking with the pannick dread of improbable croſſes and misfortunes, creating to themſelves great pain and confuſion by tragical and idle jealouſies of evils to come, and by vexing at what they cannot help or avoid? or,

6. I might inſiſt on haughty, proud, admiring thoughts of our ſelves. How much time do many men ſpend in ſtudying and conſidering their own worth and excellencies? how do they pleaſe themſelves with viewing their own endowments and accompliſhments, and imagine all others to have the ſame opinion of them they have of themſelves, that every one is ſpeaking of their praiſe, and that all that paſs by them take notice of them, and ask who they are.

I might inſtance in carking and projecting thoughts, plotting and contriving for years and ages to come, as *if our houſes were to continue for ever, and our dwelling places to all generations.*

I might inſtance in thoughts of preſumption and ſecurity; bidding our ſouls take their eaſe, and ſatisfy themſelves with thoſe good things we have laid up for many years.

I have not time now to ſpeak of vain, unprofitable, inſignificant thoughts, when, as we ordinarily ſay, we think of nothing, that is, not any thing we can give an account of; when our thoughts have no dependence nor coherence one upon the other, which I may call the nonſenſe of our thoughts, they being like the conceits of madmen, or like little boys in a School, who, as long as the Maſter is with them, all regularly keep in their ſeveral places, every one minding his proper work, but as ſoon as his back is turned, are all ſtreight out of their places in diſorder and confuſion: ſuch are our thoughts when we forget to watch over them,

them, or command them: but this is an endleſs ſubject.

III. The onely thing remaining is to name to you ſome plain practical rules for the right government of our thoughts.

1. The firſt Rule ſhall be grounded upon the words of my *Text*, *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*. If they proceed from our *hearts*, then we muſt look eſpecially after *them*. In the words therefore of *Solomon*, Prov. 4. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life*. Thus the Prophet *Jeremiah* 4. 14. *Waſh thy heart from wickedneſs, how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* and here our Saviour, *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*. Now by heart in the Scripture phraſe is moſt ordinarily meant the affections, ſuch as love, hope, fear, joy, deſire, and the like: ſo that the plain ſenſe of this place is, that ſuch as mens affections are, ſuch as the objects are, upon which they are placed, and towards which they are moſt carried out, ſuch will their thoughts be: we ſhall certainly think moſt of thoſe things that we love moſt,

that we fear moſt, that we deſire moſt. Do we not find it thus in all other inſtances? and were our affections but duely ſet upon divine and heavenly objects, we ſhould as conſtantly and as pleaſantly think of them, as the worldly or ambitious man doth of his honours and riches. Were our hearts but once throughly affected with a ſenſe of God and goodneſs, and the things of the other world, we ſhould hardly find any room in our thoughts for meaner and inferiour objects; ſuch divine and ſpiritual matters would fill our ſouls, and wholly employ and take up our minds. If we once really loved God above any preſent enjoyment or temporal contentment, it would be impoſſible that things ſenſible ſhould exclude the thoughts of him out of our minds, or that we could paſs any conſiderable time without ſome converſe with him, and addreſſes to him. Have we a buſineſs of ſuch infinite moment depending upon thoſe few hours that yet remain of our lives (how few God onely knows) and have we time and leiſure to ſpend whole days and weeks in unprofitable uſeleſs fancies and dreams, in the mean time forgetting the danger we are in, and the onely neceſſary work we have to doe? Here

Here then muſt the foundation be laid, in ſetting our affections upon things above, in frequent conſidering the importance, the neceſſity, the abſolute neceſſity of our duty in order to our happineſs, till by degrees we come to a love and liking of goodneſs and Religion, and then holy, pious and devout thoughts will be eaſie, free and almoſt natural to us; it is I grant it, a vain thing to perſuade you to look after your thoughts whilſt your minds are eſtranged from God; but a *renewed mind, a new heart*, as the Scripture calls it, would produce new and otherghes thoughts. As the fountain is, ſuch will the ſtreams be; *where the treaſure is, there will the heart be alſo: An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor can we gather figs from thorns, or grapes from thiſtles*; evil thoughts, luſts, fooliſh imaginations, are the natural genuine ſpawn of a wild diſhoneſt mind. *When I was a child*, ſaith St. *Paul, I thought as a child, I ſpake as a child, but when I became a man I put away childiſh things.* As it is impoſſible for a wiſe man, after that he is arrived to years of underſtanding, and his mind is furniſhed with the knowledge of the beſt

and worthieſt things, to pleaſe himſelf with thoſe ſilly fancies and childiſh imaginations, which were the entertainment and diverſion of his younger, rawer years; ſo 'tis no leſs impoſſible for any one who is deeply touched with the things of God, and hath a due ſenſe of thoſe things which are more excellent, to endure ſuch ſilly worldly extravagant thoughts as poſſeſſed his ſoul, and pleaſed him in the days of his ignorance and folly. *How do I love thy law*, ſaith *David*, *it is my meditation day and night.* This is the firſt rule, look after your heart and affections.

2. And more particularly; Conſider what care and art wicked men uſe to prevent good thoughts, and let us uſe the ſame diligence and endeavours to hinder evil and wicked thoughts and motions. There is no man, eſpecially that lives in any place where Religion is profeſſed, and in any tolerable credit, that can go on in a courſe of ſin without ſome regret and remorſe; ſometimes his conſcience will find a time to ſpeak to him; the natural notions of a God and a future ſtate will ever and anon be ſtirring, and are apt to

diſturb

diſturb the repoſe and jollity of the moſt ſecure and hardened ſinner. Now to one reſolvedly wicked, ſuch thoughts of a judge, a future accompt, and everlaſting puniſhments, cannot but be very uneaſie and unwelcome; and therefore doth he ſtrive all that he can to ſtifle ſuch chilling thoughts in their very firſt riſe, to ſilence or drown the whiſpers of his conſcience, he would fain even run away from himſelf, he chuſes any diverſion, entertainment or company, rather than attend to the dictates of his own mind and reaſon, is afraid of nothing ſo much as being alone and unemployed, leſt ſuch ghaſtly and frighting apprehenſions ſhould croud in upon him; he keeps himſelf therefore always in a hurry and heat, and by many other artifices endeavours to ſhut all ſuch cool and ſober thoughts out of his mind, till by often quenching the motions of God's good ſpirit, and reſiſting the light and voice of his own conſcience, he by degrees loſes all ſenſe of good and evil, all good principles are laid aſleep within him, and he arrives at his wiſht-for happy ſtate of ſinning without diſturbance or interruption.

Now if we would but uſe equal diligence and watchfulneſs to prevent or expell evil thoughts; we ſhould find juſt the ſame effect, that in time our minds would become in a great meaſure free from their ſolicitations and importunity; would we but preſently reject them with the greateſt diſdain and indignation, uſe all manner of means to fix our minds on more innocent and uſefull ſubjects, avoid all occaſions, or provocations, or incentives to evil thoughts, as carefully as wicked men do reading a good book or keeping of good company, we certainly ſhould find in a ſhort time our minds no longer peſtered or troubled with them, we ſhould begin to loſe all ſavour and reliſh of thoſe ſins we formerly delighted in; by their being for ſome conſiderable time kept out of our minds, there would ariſe a ſtrangeneſs between them and us, and they would become as uneaſie to us as now they are pleaſant and gratefull.

3. Would you prevent evil thoughts? above all things avoid idleneſs; the ſpirits of men are buſie and reſtleſs, ſomething they muſt be doing, and what a number

number of monſtrous, giddy, frothy, improbable conceits do daily fill our brains, merely for want of better employment? no better way therefore to prevent evil thoughts, than never to be at leiſure for them, *I went by the field of the ſlothfull*, ſaith *Salomon*, *and loe it was all grown over with thorns and nettles*, and therefore indeed thoſe are moſt of all concerned in this diſcourſe about thoughts, whom providence hath placed in ſuch a ſtation, as that they are under no neceſſity of minding any particular calling for the gaining of a livelihood; for whom God hath provided a ſubſiſtence without their own labouring and working for it; ſuch as theſe are in manifeſt danger of conſuming a great part of their time in idle and unprofitable, if not lewd and wicked imaginations; having little elſe to doe, the Devil or their own vain fancies will find work for them; and when conſideration and argument alone are not able to drive out theſe wicked inward companions, yet buſineſs will; and therefore I know nothing more adviſable, than that we ſhould be always ſtored with fit materials, and ſubjects to exerciſe our thoughts upon, ſuch as are worthy of a reaſo-

reaſonable creature, that is endued with an immortal ſoul, that is to live for ever. Thoſe who are moſt buſie, yet have ſome little ſpaces and intervals of time in which they are not employed. Some mens buſineſs is ſuch as though it employs their hands, and requires bodily labour, yet doth not much take up their thoughts, nor need their minds be very intent upon it; now all ſuch ſhould conſtantly have in their minds a treaſure of innocent or uſefull ſubjects to think upon, that ſo they may never be at a loſs how to employ their minds; for many of our evil thoughts are owing to this, that when our time hangs upon our hands, we are to ſeek what to think of. Let us therefore every one reſolve thus with our ſelves, the firſt opportunity of leiſure I have, the firſt vacant hour, I will ſet my ſelf to conſider of ſuch or ſuch a good ſubject, and have this always in readineſs to confront and oppoſe to any wicked or evil thoughts that may ſue for entrance or admiſſion; for if we doe thus, temptations will always find our minds full and prepoſſeſſed; and it is an hard caſe if neither the viſible nor inviſible world, neither God's works, nor providences, nor

word

word can ſupply us with matter enough for our thoughts, unleſs we feign extravagant conceits, or repeat our old ſins in our minds, or tickle our ſelves with wild ſuppoſitions of things that never were, nor are ever like to be.

4. Another rule I would give is this, that we ſhould live under the due awe of God's continual preſence with us, and bear this always in our minds, that the pure and holy God, the judge of the world, before whoſe impartial tribunal we muſt all ſhortly ſtand, is conſcious to every ſecret thought and imagination that paſſes through our minds, and that he knows them altogether, that *God is in us all*, Epheſ. 4. 6. *One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*; that he is preſent in the moſt inward corners and receſſes of our hearts and knows every one of thoſe things that come into our minds. Now who of us is there but muſt confeſs, that if his thoughts were all known and open to other men, if his parents, his friends, his neighbours, or enemies could have certain cognizance of them, he ſhould be infinitely more carefull about them than he

he is, ſhould not allow himſelf that liberty and freedom which he now takes; ſhould be as watchfull that his thoughts ſhould appear to other men orderly, rational and vertuous as he is now that his words and actions may be ſuch? and while we profeſs to believe that the tranſcendent Majeſty of Heaven and earth is acquainted with all our private conceits, is privy to all our wiſhes, deſires and purpoſes, obſerves and takes notice of all the motions of our minds, and that at the laſt day he will bring every ſecret thing into judgment; are we not aſhamed of ſhewing in his ſight ſuch folly, of committing ſuch wickedneſs in his preſence? ſhould we bluſh and be confounded to have but a mortal man certainly know all the childiſh, vain, wanton, luſtfull thoughts that poſſeſs our minds, and is it nothing to us that the great God of Heaven and earth beholds and ſees them all? Conſider this then, O vain man, who pleaſeſt thy ſelf in thy own fooliſh conceits, with thinking how finely thou doſt cheat the world, by a mask of Religion and godlineſs! conſider, I ſay, that there is not an evil thought that ever thou takeſt any pleaſure and delight in, not an

evil

evil device or imagination of thy heart, but what is perfectly *naked and open to that God with whom we have to doe.* That he is with thee in the ſilent and dark night, when no other eye ſeeth thee, when thou thinkeſt thy ſelf ſafe from all diſcovery, and that thou mayſt then ſecurely indulge thy own wicked appetites and corrupt inclinations; for *the light and darkneſs are both alike unto God, he compaſſeth thy path and thy bed, he is acquainted with all thy ways.* And the frequent conſideration of theſe things would certainly produce a mighty awe in us, and a ſuitable care not willingly to entertain or cheriſh any ſuch thoughts as we ſhould be aſhamed to have known to all the world, nor ever to ſuffer any other thoughts to take place or remain in our minds, than ſuch as we ſhould not bluſh to have written in our foreheads.

5. For the right government of your thoughts, let me recommend to you above all things ſerious devotion, eſpecially humble and hearty prayer to God Almighty. Man is compounded of two natures, a rational and ſpiritual, and a bodily; by our bodies we are joined to the

the viſible corporeal world, by our ſouls we are allied to the immaterial inviſible world: now as by our outward ſenſes the intercourſe and correſpondence is maintained between us and the corporeal world, ſo by our devotions chiefly our acquaintance is begot and kept up with the ſpiritual world; when we lay aſide all thoughts of this lower world, and the concerns of this life, and apply our ſelves to the Father of ſpirits, and make our humble addreſſes to him, we then more eſpecially converſe with him as far as this ſtate will admit of; and the more frequently and conſtantly we doe this, the more we ſhall abſtract our minds from theſe inferiour objects which are ſo apt to entangle our hearts, and take up all our thoughts, and ſhall make the things of the other world become more familiar to us; for when we betake our ſelves ſeriouſly to our prayers, we do then bid adieu to all that is viſible and ſublunary, and for that time endeavour to employ our minds wholly on what relates to another life; and therefore conſequently the oftner we doe this, and the more hearty and ſerious we are in it, the more our minds will be uſed and accuſtomed to divine thoughts

thoughts and pious meditations, and weaned from preſent ſenſible objects. Every devout exerciſe conſcientiouſly performed will ſeaſon our ſpirits, and leave a good tincture upon them, and diſpoſe us for worthy and excellent thoughts, it is like keeping of good company, a man is by degrees moulded amd faſhioned into ſome likeneſs unto them, and on the other ſide, the intermiſſion, neglect or formal and perfunctory performance of our devotion, will ſoon breed in us a forgetfulneſs of God and heavenly things, as omitting to ſpeak of an abſent or dead friend, or neglecting to call him to our mind, by degrees wears him quite out of our thoughts and memory; ſo that you ſee a due ſenſe of God upon our minds, and of thoſe things that belong to our greateſt intereſts, is by nothing ſo well maintained as by our conſtant devotion; this is like ſeeing our friends often, or converſing with them every day, it preſerves acquaintance with them, it cheriſhes our love and kindneſs towards them. I end all with that excellent Collect of our Church.

*Almighty*

*Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnifie thy holy name, through Christ our Lord.* Amen.

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A SER-

A

# SERMON

Preached at the

Anniverſary Meeting

OF THE

# GENTLEMEN

Educated at

St. *Paul's* SCHOOL.

## The Sixth Sermon.

1 COR. XIII. 4, 5, 6, 7.

*Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not: charity vaunteth not it ſelf, is not puffed up,* &c.

THE chief and moſt laudable deſign of this and other the like *Anniverſary Meetings* being to promote love, kindneſs and friendſhip amongſt men, from the conſideration of

ſome particular relations, by which (over and above what doth belong to us in common with all men and Chriſtians) we are more nearly united and linked one to the other. I thought I could not entertain you with any thing more proper to this Solemnity, than a diſcourſe upon theſe words, wherein I intend

I. To deſcribe unto you wherein this amicable friendly temper and mutual love, which we are to further amongſt our ſelves this day, doth conſiſt. And

II. To recommend it eſpecially to *your* care and practice, who have had the advantage of a liberal and ingenuous education.

I. To ſhew you wherein true and undiſſembled love doth conſiſt, which I ſhall do onely by paraphraſing or commenting as briefly as I can upon this moſt excellent deſcription of Charity given us by St. *Paul.*

1. *Charity ſuffereth long,* is not haſty to return any evil or injury we may have received from others; it makes a man patient

tient, forgetfull of wrongs, and ſlow to demand ſatisfaction. He that is poſſeſſed with this excellent grace of charity will defer righting himſelf when injured, and ſeem for a great while as if he did not at all obſerve or take notice of thoſe affronts and trespaſſes, which the furious and wrathfull would be ſure ſtreight to revenge. He doth not lie at catch, and preſently take all advantages againſt his neighbour, and trouble him for every little offence, and require ſtrict reparation for every petty damage he may unjuſtly ſuſtain: he doth not take all forfeitures that the rigour of the law would give him, or ſtand with his debtours for a day, or ſtreight break off friendſhip for the firſt unkindneſs; but he will for a long time bear with the failures and miſcarriages of other men, as all of us do eaſily overlook and readily forgive the miſtakes or miſdemeanours of thoſe whom we entirely love; with great patience he waiteth their amendment, and ſilently tarries till of their own accord they make him ſatisfaction, and is always willing to hearken to any fair terms of accommodation, and to accept of the leaſt ſubmiſſion and acknowledgment.

Contrary to all this is the temper of thoſe whom the *Apoſtle* calls *fierce*, and *Solomon*, *haſty of ſpirit*: who when once offended breath forth nothing but utter ruine and ſlaughter, and are for the preſent deſtruction of all who ſtand in their way. Thus *David* in that great fit of impatience, 1 *Sam.* 25. when diſpleaſed at *Nabal*'s ſurly anſwer, reſolved ſtreight to murther him and all his houſhold; and ſo the Servant in the Parable of our Saviour, St. *Matthew* 18. who, though his Lord had forgiven him a vaſt debt of ten thouſand talents, yet after this, when he met with one of his Fellow-ſervants who owed him but an hundred pence, laid violent hands on him, took him by the throat, would not tarry one hour for his money, notwithſtanding the poor man humbly beſought him to have patience with him but for a-while, and promiſed him he would honeſtly pay him all.

But a truly charitable man ſuffereth long, and forgiveth much, and dealeth with others as he hath experienced, and yet hopes God will deal with him; he giveth them time to recollect and bethink themſelves,

ſelves, doth not ſoon deſpair of their growing better, but tries all the arts and methods of patience and kindneſs, and is unwilling to be brought to extremities, or to doe any thing that may ſeem harſh or rigid; and in a word, had rather ſuffer an hundred than doe one evil.

2. *Charity is kind*, χρηστὸς, gentle and courteous, eaſie to be treated with, is gratious and benign, and as far as may be, uſefull to all. Chriſtian charity doth ſweeten mens minds and ſpirits, ſmooths the ruggedneſs and unevenneſs of their natures, makes them tractable, affable, and, as far as is conſiſtent with their innocency, complaiſant.

Contrary to which is that roughneſs and ſourneſs of diſpoſition and manners which is diſtaſtfull to, and grates upon every one that falls in its way; as it was ſaid of *Nabal* before-mentioned, that he was *ſuch a ſon of Belial, that a man could not ſpeak unto him:* Such were the *Phariſees* of old, grave, formal and moroſe, troubleſome and uneaſie to all who converſed with them, ſullen and froward. And too many ſuch there are in the

world, who pretend to great and high attainments in Religion, and yet are of ſuch techy and fiery diſpoſitions, that there is no living quietly by them; nothing can pleaſe them, a man is afraid of having any thing to doe with them, they are of ſuch waſpiſh, quarrelſome and churliſh natures.

Whereas he in whom Chriſtian charity dwells endeavours to oblige every one, and carries himſelf fairly towards all, ſo as to gain every man's good word and opinion; he is calm and mild, and friendly in his deportment, receiveth every one that addreſſeth himſelf to him with civility and reſpect; his demeanour is full of compliance and condeſcention, his carriage and behaviour free, candid and ingenuous; and indeed there is no greater pleaſure in the world than what is to be found in the converſation of thoſe in whom the true Chriſtian temper and ſpirit rules and prevails.

No one complains of ſuch an one; he is not grievous or offenſive to any, and if he cannot doe you all that courteſie you deſire, yet he ſo civily denies you, that you

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are almoſt as much pleaſed as if he had granted your requeſt. *Charity is kind.*

3. *Charity envieth not*; the charitable man grudgeth not at another's good, doth not mutter and repine becauſe his neighbour thrives better, hath a greater trade, is of better repute, hath got a larger eſtate, or hath arrived to greater dignity and preferment than himſelf. Charity rather rejoyceth and pleaſeth it ſelf in other mens doing well; it addeth to a charitable man's contentment to ſee other men ſatisfied, and doth really miniſter unto, and encreaſe his own happineſs to ſee the happineſs of his neighbours and acquaintance. He findeth almoſt as much delight and complacence in their good fortune and ſucceſs as they themſelves do, thus making the happineſs of every man to become really and truly his own: it maketh him better to ſee other men in health, and refreſheth his ſpirits to ſee others chearfull and pleaſed. No real benefit or advantage happens to any round about him, but he comes in for his ſhare, and largely partakes of it, and the pleaſure of it becomes as truly his, as it is the perſons who is poſſeſſed of it.

Nay, as it hath been obſerved by ſome, here love hath the advantage. I enjoy greater pleaſure in my neighbour's good ſucceſs and proſperity than he himſelf can poſſibly do: for all the content and joy that his proſperity miniſters to him, I have pure and unmixt, without bearing part in thoſe cares and troubles with which it is uſually attended.

Love makes us not apt to take diſguſt and pet, though God ſhould beſtow the good things of this life more liberally upon ſome others than our ſelves, whereas the envious man would not have God doe any good turn for any perſon without his leave and approbation. He would alone engroſs and monopolize all the bleſſings of heaven and benefits of the earth, or at leaſt, if he could have his will, none ſhould partake of them but ſome private friends of his, and thoſe he hath a good opinion of. He would have God mind no one elſe in the world, nor hear any other prayers beſides his own; nay he reckons himſelf ill dealt with, and mutinies againſt heaven if any thing goes beſide him, or any one enjoys ſomething he

he is without. There is many a man in the world who thinks himſelf beyond all expreſſion miſerable, for no other reaſon but onely becauſe another man is happy; the good things his neighbour enjoys eat up his fleſh, dry up his marrow, and prey upon his ſpirits, make his eyes hollow, his cheeks lean, his face pale, and his bones rotten. Hence it hath been obſerved that envious men are the onely perſons to whom without form of juſtice or breach of charity we may doe harm; ſince to doe them hurt or miſchief we need onely doe good to their neighbours. Love *envieth not.*

4. *Charity vaunteth not it ſelf,* οὐ περπερεύεται. I ſhall not diſpute the rigid meaning of the original word, but follow our tranſlation of it; vaunteth not it ſelf, is not inſolent and domineering, and arrogantly impoſing upon others, as if we onely were wiſe and worthy to be regarded; but it is modeſt and governable, willing to yield, and comply, and ſubmit to the judgment of others. This vaunting, fooliſh and giddy elation of the mind is the cauſe of manifold quarrels and diſturbances in the world, when men mala-

malapertly take upon themſelves to preſcribe to others, and fondly expect that their ſingular humour onely ſhould be obſerved, that their private will and fancy ſhould ſtand for a rule and law to all others, and that all men ſhould accommodate themſelves to their idle conceits, fond prejudices, unreaſonable cuſtomes or impertinent opinions.

Charity *vaunteth not it ſelf*, and as it follows, *is not puffed up*, which is of near ſignification, and therefore may be joined with the former. Haughtineſs and imperiouſneſs of mind, proceeding from a too great love and opinion of our ſelves, doth eſpecially ſhew it ſelf in deſpiſing all others. Proud perſons are ſo full of themſelves, ſo wrapt up in the vain contemplation of their own perfections, that they ſlight and deſpiſe all the world; they look upon it as a diſparagement to learn from any, they cannot bear the leaſt contradiction or oppoſition, they take upon themſelves to judge and condemn all others, and will allow none to pretend to wiſedom or underſtanding beſides themſelves. Any the leaſt diſreſpect or overſight, any failure of due obſervance and ſubmiſ-

ſubmiſſion ſtreight begets a quarrel; for they think themſelves wronged, affronted, and unjuſtly dealt with, if every one does not value them juſt at the ſame rate they do themſelves.

But now love makes us humble and lowly minded, teacheth us to value thoſe accompliſhments, to ſet a due price and eſtimate upon thoſe abilities others are endued with, and not to magnifie our ſelves, or *to think of our ſelves more highly than we ought to think:* and therefore in Scripture, where the vertue of charity is commanded, humility is very often joined with it; *Put on therefore bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind. Be ye kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another, eſteeming others better than your ſelves.*

What we have a real kindneſs for is apt to appear to us in all circumſtances better than indeed it is, and were our minds once throughly poſſeſſed with charity towards others, we could not eaſily entertain any deſpicable and contemptible thoughts of them, but upon all occaſions

caſions ſhould bear a due regard and deference to them; and if this one effect of charity did but get ground in the world, if men were humble and modeſt, diffident and diſtruſtfull of themſelves, willing to learn, and receive inſtructions from others more learned and wiſer than themſelves, we might hope ſoon to ſee an end of thoſe unchriſtian feuds and ſchiſms which our Church is ſo miſerably infeſted with. But ſo long as men lean ſo much to their own underſtandings, and are ſwelled with ſuch lofty conceits of their own abilities that they think they need no inſtruction; ſo long as they are ſo fond of their own private and ſingular opinions, as that they not onely reſolve inflexibly to adhere to them themſelves, but ſeek to impoſe them upon others, and fall out with all who are not of their mind and way, nay take upon them to pronounce every one damned who is not as fond of their childiſh conceits as themſelves are; what can we expect but *ſtrife and envying, contention, confuſion and every evil work? Charity vaunteth not it ſelf, is not puffed up.*

5. *Cha-*

5. *Charity doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly*; οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ doth never uſe others rudely in words or geſtures, eſpecially not reproachfully; and thus it is fitly joined with what went before; contumelious behaviour being the natural effect of pride and arrogance. We care not how we demean our ſelves towards thoſe whom we deſpiſe and ſet at nought, we can hardly vouchſafe ſuch a good look or a civil word: but now love giveth no abuſive language, never caſteth dirt in the face of any; it never endeavoureth to diſhonour or diſparage any ones perſon, but is reſpectfull to all however they differ from us; it can confute the errours of thoſe whom we oppoſe without any opprobrious or diſgracefull reflexions, and anſwer their arguments, and ſhew that they are in the wrong without reviling their perſons, or calling them names. And it were well if this were regarded more than it is in our religious debates and controverſies; if we would learn to differ from one another in our judgments and matters of opinion without virulent railing, and taunting ſpeeches, and unhandſome beſpattering and expoſing our adverſaries,

verſaries, which one thing, if it were conſcientiouſly obſerved, would go a great way towards the maintaining peace amongſt us, notwithſtanding our different ſentiments and apprehenſions. The ill language which we give one another oftentimes doth ſet us at a greater diſtance, and more eſtrange our minds from one another, than all our different conceptions and judgments. Railing againſt thoſe who diſſent from us never yet made, nor is it likely ever to gain, any one convert or proſelyte: men are naturally inclined to ſuſpect that to be a bad cauſe which needs ſuch baſe and unmanly artifices to uphold it; and it is a ſhrewd ſign that we want ſubſtantial reaſons and arguments againſt any thing, when once we begin to ſcold and cry out with him in *Lucian* ὦ πανάθλιε, *thou curſed damned villain*, it is not ſo or ſo; but now love is not rude or clamorous, but patiently and calmly hears both ſides, and ſoberly and cooly debates the matter, and reaſons meekly about things; it conſidereth more what it is that is ſpoken than who it is that ſpeaks, it giveth no needleſs provocation, it *behaveth not it ſelf unſeemly*.

6. *Cha-*

6. *Charity ſeeketh not her own*, A ſelfiſh, ſtingy and narrow ſpirit, when we care for none but our ſelves, and regard not how it fares with other men, ſo we do but live in eaſe and plenty our ſelves, is of all other things moſt contrary to that charity which our Saviour both by his doctrine and example hath taught and ſo earneſtly recommended to us; love is not mercenary or ſelf-ſeeking, it inclineth us to doe good to others, though we thereby receive not the leaſt advantage to our ſelves, beſides the pleaſure of doing it; if our hearts be full of true charity, it will never ſuffer us to be in quiet till we give it ſome vent, and will make us impatiently ſeek for opportunities of exerciſing it; it will ſpend it ſelf in laying out for others, ſo far is love from projecting gain or profit to it ſelf by that kindneſs it doeth to others, that it is beneficent to the evil and unthankfull, to the indigent and thoſe who are unable to make any requital; it teacheth us to *lend not hoping to receive again*, nay to doe good to thoſe who return evil for it, ſo far is it from any baſe or ſelfiſh deſigns. 1 *Cor.* 10. 24. *Let no man ſeek his*

*own*

*own but every man another's wealth*; Chriſtian charity obligeth us to purſue the benefit and edification of others, though it be with ſome loſs to our ſelves, and teacheth us willingly to ſuffer ſome detriment, rather than omit a fair occaſion of doing a publick good. We are not *to pleaſe our ſelves, but rather to pleaſe our neighbour for his good*, *Rom.* 15. 1, 2. for this is the mind which was in Chriſt Jeſus, who denied himſelf, nay laid down his life for the good of mankind.

Chriſtians are or ought to be ſo cloſely linked together by this bond of charity that every one ſhould be as ſolicitous and concerned for the good of other men as he is for his own. I am ſure the love of the primitive Chriſtians was ſo remarkable, and raiſed ſuch an admiration even amongſt their very enemies and perſecutours, that it was a proverbial ſpeech amongſt the Gentiles, *ſee how the Chriſtians love one another*, what care do they take one of another? had they been all brethren according to the fleſh, they could not more heartily have contrived nor more induſtriouſly advanced one anothers intereſt and welfare than they did:

did: Was any one amongſt them caſt into priſon, all the Chriſtians of that place preſently flocked to him to viſit and relieve him? was any one viſited with ſickneſs, all the beſt and greateſt perſonages did ſtreight condeſcend to miniſter unto him in his weak eſtate? were any poor and in want, their ſtraits and neceſſities were no ſooner known than they were relieved? But what is now become of this brave and generous ſpirit? when inſtead of doing good unto, we devour and bite one another? *charity ſeeketh not her own.*

7. *Charity is not eaſily provoked,* οὐ παροξύνεται, which differs from what we had before, *it ſuffereth long,* in this that the former eſpecially reſpects revenge, but this the paſſion of anger, and though we may ſometimes upon juſt occaſions be diſpleaſed and offended, yet charity will teach us always to obſerve theſe two rules.

(1.) This excellent grace of charity will give us ſo much power and command over our ſelves, as that we ſhall not be ſuddenly inflamed upon every

ſlight inadvertency, miſtake or misfortune of our brother; we ſhall not be eaſily angred upon every little and trivial occaſion. A charitable man is not nice and delicate, apt to pick quarrels, to take fire and fall out into rage and paſſion upon every croſs accident or miſcarriage; he is eaſie in his converſe and deportment; and it is no difficult matter for a man to live with him without ever offending him. But alas! how weak and impotent are moſt of us in this caſe? how doth every little forgetfulneſs or negligence of a ſervant, inferiour or neighbour, the breaking of a glaſs, the loſs of a trifle, diſcompoſe and ruffle our minds, and raiſe ſuch ſtorms and tumults in our breaſts as require a great deal of time and trouble to lay and appeaſe? we have but little kindneſs for thoſe whom we cannot at all bear with; not onely charity but even common humanity requires this at our hands, that we ſhould mutually paſs by and overlook ſuch little indiſcretions, overſights, miſtakes and inadvertencies, which we are all more or leſs ſubject unto, and cannot live without.

(2.) When

(II.) When we have great and juſt cauſe of anger and offence given us, yet charity ſuffereth us not to fall into immoderate paſſion, or to be tranſported by blind rage and fury beyond the bounds of reaſon and religion: it will ſecure us from all paroxyſms of anger, for ſo the Greek word properly ſignifies: it will reſtrain that unruly and ungovernable paſſion within its due bounds and meaſures, and keep it in ſome temper and moderation, and not ſuffer it to betray us into any unreaſonable and raſh actions, which end in ſhame and a bitter repentance. Our anger, how juſt ſoever, ſhould never make us hurt or injure the perſon offending. It ſhould never break out into fury, which is the ſhort madneſs of a man; we ſhould never be ſo far exaſperated, as to ſuffer our paſſion to hurry us into any indecency or exceſs.

It is certainly as lawfull on ſome occaſions to be angry, as it is to rejoice, grieve, pity, or exerciſe any other affection of our minds: there is no paſſion implanted by God in man, but what was deſigned by our wiſe Maker for ſome

good end, and whilſt in the exerciſe thereof it is directed to that end, and kept within its due bounds and limits, ſubject unto and regulated by reaſon, the principal and imperial faculty of our ſouls, ſo far it is certainly harmleſs, nay uſefull.

In truth, all the paſſions in themſelves ſimply conſidered are neither good nor evil. Love, hate, hope, fear, joy, ſorrow, and the reſt, as they are parts of our nature, are things indifferent; but when they are fitly circumſtantiated and ordered, they then become morally good, and are highly beneficial to us, and ſerve many excellent purpoſes: but when they are miſplac'd or extravagant, when they command us, and are our maſters, they then become morally evil, and the moſt troubleſome things in the world both to our ſelves and others. We muſt take great care therefore to curb and bridle this paſſion of anger, to keep it under government, and not ſuffer it to dethrone our reaſon, or to hinder the free uſe of it, or to make us act any thing precipitantly, unadviſedly or fooliſhly. And this I think may be given as a certain rule whereby

whereby we may judge when our anger becomes ſinfull and vitious, and doth tranſgreſs the limits of charity; namely, when it is raiſed to ſuch an height, as that we have no perfect command over our ſelves, and cannot freely uſe or exerciſe our reaſons and underſtandings; when we drive on headlong, and the beaſt rides the man; when we doe we know not what, and repent of it after it is done; when our paſſion is got into the chair, and carries all before it; when our bloud boils, and our ſpirits are in a great fermentation, and we are ſo blinded with fury and rage that we know no difference between friend or foe, right or wrong, but are hurried on by the torrent of an impetuous paſſion to the commiſſion of the greateſt outrages, to the moſt diſorderly and unſeemly actions: this is ſurely contrary to charity which *is not eaſily provoked.*

8. *Charity thinketh no evil:* is apt and ready to put the beſt and faireſt interpretations upon all the actions of other men. Whatever vices other men are guilty of, love, if poſſible, will find out excuſes and plead their pardon. It will be ſo far from

aggravating thoſe injuries which our neighbours may at any time have offer'd us, that it will ſet it ſelf to find out ſome charitable conſtruction or other, and be ingenious in deviſing apologies for them. It will put us in mind of the good offices they may ſometimes have done us, reckon up the ſeveral kindneſſes we may have formerly received from them, and make uſe of that as an argument to prevail with us more eaſily to paſs by the wrong we now ſuffer. Love will be ſure to alledge ſomething or other in their favour, ſometimes their age, ſometimes their ignorance, ſometimes the ſickneſs of their body, ſometimes that of their mind: perhaps it was done by miſtake, perhaps unawares, againſt the mind and will of him who did it. Whatever miſchief or damage we have received, yet perhaps it was never intended or deſigned, and it was done rather by chance, than out of any ill will: at leaſt he was miſinformed, he was in a great and violent paſſion, and much out of humour when he did it, and perhaps now is heartily ſorry for what he has done, and is juſt coming to ask us forgiveneſs.

Love

Love is not jealous or ſuſpicious, doth not endeavour to blaſt mens good actions and reputations by imagining and ſurmiſing ſome ſecret evil or bad deſign in them, but makes a favourable conſtruction, and a fair and candid interpretation of every thing, and always judgeth the beſt.

I know nothing more oppoſite to charity than that detracting, cenſorious humour which prevails ſo much in the world: when men raſhly cenſure and condemn their neighbours without any juſt or probable grounds, and by vain ſurmiſes and ill-favoured conſtructions leſſen the good they doe, and aggravate the evil; as thus, "Such an one is a very liberal "and charitable man, and it muſt be ac- "knowledged that he doth a great deal "of good in the place where he lives; "but I wiſh he be not vain-glorious in "all this. I am much afraid he doth it "onely to be ſeen of men. Another is "indeed very ſerious and devout in the "Church, but I doubt whether he be as "honeſt at home. I can find no fault "with ſuch a neighbour, he is wholly

" blameleſs as to his outward converſa-
" tion, a good moral man, but I do not
" queſtion but he hath ſome private
" haunts, he is onely a little more cun-
" ning and cloſe than the reſt of his
" neighbours. Thus do many men, who it may be are conſcious to themſelves that they have no true ſolid worth on which to bottom a reputation, ſeek to raiſe it on the ruine of other mens. Such as are bad themſelves are apt to think all others ſo too, and to ſuſpect that every one is an hypocrite and diſſembler, who pretends to more honeſty or religion than themſelves. They cannot imagine that others, whatever outward ſhew they may make, can really abſtain from thoſe pleaſures and gratifications which they are ſo ſtrongly inclined unto, and in which they find ſo much ſavour and reliſh. But love takes every thing by the beſt handle, and never judgeth nor ſuſpecteth any man to be worſe than his viſible actions do declare him. *Love thinketh no evil.*

9. *Charity rejoyceth not in iniquity, but in the truth.* A charitable man is ſo far from rejoycing when others doe amiſs, that he is paſſionately affected with ſorrow

row for it. He is moved to as much pity and compaſſion, and feels as ſenſible a grief for the ſins and follies of thoſe amongſt whom he dwells, as he doth for any temporal afflictions or bodily calamities that do at any time befall them. He longeth for the ſalvation of all men, and nothing can trouble him more than to ſee men needleſly and fooliſhly deſtroying and undoing themſelves, when by the Religion they profeſs they enjoy ſo many and ſuch fair opportunities of making themſelves for ever happy. But he *rejoyceth in the truth.* Nothing pleaſeth him ſo much as to ſee goodneſs and truth prevail and inlarge their dominions, and become proſperous and triumphant in the world. He joineth with the heavenly hoſt at the converſion of every ſinner in their hymns of praiſes and allelujahs, and heartily bleſſeth the divine goodneſs for thoſe graces and excellent diſpoſitions and qualities he finds others endued with.

How far then are they from charity to whom it is meat and drink to hear a bad ſtory of their neighbour? who watch for mens halting, make ſport with their ſins,

ſins, and take great pleaſure and delight in publiſhing the guilt and ſhame of others: who gad from houſe to houſe, and run into all companies on no other errand but to proclaim and divulge ſuch failings and imperfections as they know their neighbours are guilty of; who curiouſly pry into mens actions on purpoſe to ſpy out ſome faults, and then ſeverely comment and criticiſe upon them; and whereever they come, make them the ſubject of their impertinent and unſavoury prattle. But the Apoſtle farther adds,

10. *Charity beareth all things.* The words in the original are πάντα στέγει, which are here badly rendred. It ſhould be, as almoſt all Interpreters do agree, covereth and concealeth all things. Charity chuſeth rather to hide and caſt a veil over the ſins and faults of others, than to trumpet and proclaim them. A charitable man is not wanting in his duty to warn and rebuke thoſe whom he knows guilty of any notorious ſins, but then he doth it ſecretly and in private: before others he chuſes rather to take notice of what is good and commendable

in

in men, than of what is faulty: he never ſpeaks ill of any man behind his back, but rather if poſſible finds ſomething or other to commend him for. There is hardly any man ſo wicked, ſo much enſlaved to baſeneſs and villany, but he hath ſome good quality or other, and this charity will be ſure to lay hold on, and improve to his advantage: not that we are bound to commend any one falſely, or may not ſpeak the truth of a perſon, when it is for his own or other mens advantage that it ſhould be diſcovered; but charity obligeth us to give a favourable character of others, and to repreſent them, as much as may be, to advantage; and to take all opportunities to commend them, rather than needleſly to vilify and diſparage them, and ſpeak all the evil we know of them.

There are many who are always complaining of the looſeneſs and prophaneneſs of the age, of the ſins and debaucheries of the times they live in, and under this pretence they grievouſly ſlander, backbite and calumniate their neighbours, and take all occaſions to rip up and lay open their faults, and with great ſtudy

and

and artifice publiſh their diſgraces; and this they doe with great demureneſs and turned-up eyes, as if they were mightily concerned for the honour of God and Religion, and were heartily troubled and grieved to hear or report ſuch ſhamefull and ſcandalous things, and thus when they have vented a moſt curſed malitious lye, with the woman in the *Proverbs*, they wipe their mouths and ſay they have done no wickedneſs, and would have you impute it wholly to their zeal, and not to their malice. This I cannot better repreſent unto you than by tranſlating the words of an ancient Father, who thus deſcribes ſome in his days.

[There are, ſaith he, who ſhall endeavour to ſhadow and diſguiſe the malice and ill-will they have conceived againſt any ſort of perſons or company of men with the falſe colour of zeal for the glory of God, and ſorrow for the wickedneſs of the times; and then looking very ſadly and premiſing a deep ſigh, with a dejected countenance and dolefull voice, they vent their lies and ſlanders; and therefore, ſaith he, they doe all this, that they may the more eaſily perſuade thoſe who

who hear them of the truth of what they relate; that the ſtory may be the ſooner believed, and more readily ſwallowed, as ſeeming to be uttered with an unwilling mind, and rather with the affection of one that condoles, than any ſetch of malice: I am grievouſly ſorry for it, ſaith one, for I love the man well, he is one of excellent parts, and hath many things very laudable in him, but— and then he aggravates this particular ſin (whether truly or falſly imputed to him it matters not) to the higheſt degree: Another tells you, I knew ſo much of him before, but it ſhould never have gone farther for me, but now ſeeing the matter is out (though perhaps he was the firſt broacher of it) he ſhakes his head and lifts up his eyes and tells you it is indeed too true; he ſpeaks it with grief of heart, and then tells it in every company he comes in, but adds it is great pity, he otherwiſe excells in many things, but in this he cannot be excuſed.] Thus far my Authour.

There is, ſaith *Solomon*, *Prov.* 12. 18. that ſpeaketh like the piercings of a ſword, and *Prov.* 18. 8. *the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the inner-*

*innermoſt parts of the belly: Curſe the whiſperer and double tongued, for ſuch have deſtroyed many that were at peace,* ſaith the ſon of *Syrach:* This if any thing is point blank contrary to charity, for *love covereth all ſins, Prov.* 10. 12. *Charity hideth all things.*

11. Yet farther, *Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things.* It maketh us to believe all the good of others we have the leaſt probable ground for, and to hope that which we have no reaſon to believe. We very eaſily believe thoſe things to be, which we before-hand wiſh were true, and therefore charity being a wiſhing well to all men, muſt needs incline us to believe well alſo of them: this daily experience tells us, that where we love, there we are very unapt to diſcern faults, though never ſo plain and obvious to the impartial and diſintereſted; witneſs the ſtrange blindneſs men generally have towards their own, though never ſo groſs and fooliſh. The judgment of charity is very large and comprehenſive, it takes in all, and believes well of every one who continues within the pale of the Chriſtian Church, doth never preſume to judge

mens

mens hearts, or pry into their ſecret intentions.

Nay, where there is ſome reaſon to doubt of a man's truth and ſincerity, yet charity *hopeth* the beſt. It deſpairs of no man's repentance and ſalvation, but entertains ſome hopes that even the worſt of men, the moſt refractory and diſobedient will at length amend and grow wiſer. Whoever ſins, charity hopes it is out of weakneſs, or ſurpriſe, or inadvertency, and not out of wilfulneſs or habitual cuſtome: whoever miſtakes charity hopes the errour proceeds from ignorance onely, or unavoidable prejudice, or unhappy education, and not from a bad and wicked mind, or from any worldly ſenſual intereſt. And in this particular is the charity of our Church much to be commended, who contents her ſelf with propounding an undoubted ſafe way to Heaven without paſſing any reprobating ſentences and anathema's on all other Churches and ſocieties of profeſſours, and excluding them from all hope of mercy or poſſibility of ſalvation. And indeed it concerneth us all to take great care rightly to diſcharge this office of charity, ſince accor-

according as we judge others, ſo ſhall we our ſelves be judged; it is our intereſt as well as our duty to be very mild and mercifull in our cenſures of others, and to judge of them with favour and allowance, ſince *with what meaſure we meaſure unto others, it ſhall be meaſured unto us again.*

12. Laſtly, *charity endureth all things*; never will be wearied or tired out; is not fickle and wavering; thinks nothing too much to doe, nothing too great to undertake, nothing too hard to undergo for the good of others. Love ſticks not at any thing, nay makes any duty or labour eaſie and pleaſant; as *Jacob* after his diſappointment grudged not to ſerve the other ſeven years for the ſake of *Rachel. Love is ſtrong as death, many waters cannot quench it, nor the flouds drown it*; nothing can allay the heat of its endeavours, or ſtop its progreſs; it eaſily ſurmounts all difficulties, and triumphs over all oppoſition: though we meet with great ingratitude, contradiction and unworthy returns from thoſe whom we have obliged, yet love is not apt to repent of the good it hath done, but ſtill perſe-

perſeveres, endeavouring to overcome evil with good, unkindneſſes with courteſies. Love doth not invent excuſes or ſeeek delays when a fair occaſion of exerciſing it ſelf is offered; it makes us willing for ſome time to leave our own buſineſs, though of near concernment to us, to expoſe our ſelves to heat and cold, to weariſome and painfull journies, to deny our ſelves our own eaſe, and pleaſure, and profit in ſome meaſure, rather than to forfeit an opportunity of ſhewing a great kindneſs. *Charity endureth all things.*

This now is that affection of love which we ought to bear one towards another: this is that kind, benign and gratious temper which manifeſts us to be the children of God, and to partake of his nature, and to be like unto him who *is good and doth good*, which ſhews us to be the followers of our Saviour in deed and in truth, *who went about doing good*, and which alone can fit us for that Kingdom wherein true love, undiſturbed peace and univerſal charity dwells and reigns for evermore.

To convince you of the neceſſity of this frame and temper of ſpirit, let me onely

put you in mind of what St. *Paul* ſaith in the beginning of this Chap. that though a man ſhould be able *to ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels*, had the gift of all languages, and could diſcourſe with the greateſt eloquence and efficacy, yet without this charity he would be but as *ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal.* Though a man had the *gift of prophecy*, and could foretell things to come, were inſpired from above, and were able to convert others to the Faith, and propagate the Chriſtian Religion in the world; though he could *underſtand all myſteries*, expound all Scripture, and give an account of the moſt difficult and ſublime truths, and had *all knowledge and all faith*, nay the higheſt degree of that faith by which miracles are wrought, ſo that he could *remove mountains*, yet without this affection of ſincere love he would be nothing worth; nay though a man ſhould part with his whole eſtate, and *beſtow all his goods to feed the poor*, though he ſhould exerciſe the higheſt acts of bounty and liberality; nay, laſtly, though he ſhould *give his body to be burned* for his religion, and die a martyr for the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, yet if he hath not charity, if he

cannot

cannot patiently bear and pardon injuries and affronts, if he delights not to doe good, and rejoyceth not in the happineſs of other men, if he be envious, and malitious and implacable, of a narrow contracted ſpirit, it profiteth him nothing.

II. I onely beg your patience whilſt in a very few words I recommend this *more excellent way*, as St. *Paul* calls it, this ſpirit of love to you eſpecially who have enjoyed the advantages of a liberal and ingenuous education. And if ever I could hope to prevail and perſuade, I ſhould certainly expect no little ſucceſs in ſuch an aſſembly as this, conſiſting of perſons well taught and bred, whoſe natures have been refined and poliſhed, and minds improved and cultivated, and new-moulded and faſhioned by the care and skill of thoſe excellent perſons to whoſe charge we were committed.

I think it ought not over-ſlightly to be taken notice of, that in ſuch an age as this, there are yet ſo many perſons of faſhion and quality who are not aſhamed to own their education, and therefore may be reaſonably thought yet ſenſible of

the benefits that may have accrued to them from it. I ſay, in ſuch an age as this, wherein the firſt thing almoſt that Gentlemen affect, after they have once got free from under the diſcipline of others, is preſently to forget all they have learned, and to eraſe out of their minds all the ſober counſels and uſefull rules they had before received, huffing at all inſtruction as a piece of pedantry, fit onely for children in coats, or fools, and freely revenging themſelves on their Schoolmaſters and Tutours, for attempting to make them wiſe and good againſt their wills.

But notwithſtanding this, I muſt ſay, that by our thus meeting together we do but little credit either to our ſelves or the School where we were brought up, or the perſons under whoſe feet we ſate, unleſs we alſo clearly diſcover to the world in our temper and converſation ſomething excellent and ſingular that may diſtinguiſh us from the rude untutoured vulgar, the ignorant and illiterate rout.

Were that onely good breeding which is now moſt faſhionable, and doth in ordinary

dinary account paſs amongſt us for ſuch, I ſhould very freely acknowledge it a bleſſing not much to be valued or regarded. To move ones leg and body gracefully and in time, to bow and cringe in mood and figure; to wear cloaths moſt exactly made according to the neweſt mode; to be able to ſpeak of the *French* Court, and to repeat the witty part of a Play, and to talk finely of love and honour, and make ſmart reparties; and to give every one good words without meaning any thing at all by them; to know how to embroider a diſcourſe with many oaths and a little Atheiſm; to be able to drink high, and hector loudly; to abuſe a Parſon, and to dare to kill a man; theſe and ſuch others not worth naming are too often now a-days reputed the onely gentile accompliſhments of a well-bred perſon?

But theſe are not the things we learnt at St. *Paul's School*, nor is this the education which we now aſſemble in God's Houſe to bleſs his name for. Thoſe are truly well bred, not onely whoſe underſtandings and diſcerning faculties are improved and inlarged, but eſpecially whoſe

natural rudeneſs and ſtubbornneſs is broken, and wild and unruly paſſions tamed; whoſe affections and deſires are made governable and orderly; who are become manageable and flexible, calm and tractable, willing to endure reſtraints and to live according to the beſt rules. By good education we are, as it were, made over again, the roughneſs of our natural tempers is filed off, and all their defects ſupplied; and by prudent diſcipline, good example and wiſe counſel our manners are ſo formed, that by the benefit of an happy education we come almoſt as much to excell other men, as they do the brute beaſts that have no underſtanding.

How much therefore we are obliged to our School, we can no better way ſhew than by our civil and comely demeanour, by our compliant and inoffenſive converſation, by our courteous and affable, ſweet and benign diſpoſition, by our kind, uſefull and ſociable behaviour in the world.

If we conſult the ſober judgments of all men, we ſhall ſoon find that there is nothing

nothing renders a man more reſpected, his company more pleaſant and delightfull and deſirable, nothing procures greater credit and reputation, and ſooner obtains the good word of every one, than a free, ingenuous, candid and condeſcending temper, that ſtudies to oblige, and rejoices to doe good; That there is nothing more noble and generous than an univerſal love and good-will to all men; nothing more amiable than mildneſs, peaceableneſs and gentleneſs of ſpirit; nothing more gracefull and gentile than kindneſs and benignity; nothing more honourable and manly than being uſefull and beneficial to all round about us.

And theſe are indeed qualities and perfections hardly attainable (as a wiſe man expreſſes it) by thoſe *who hold the plough, and glory in the goad; who drive oxen, and are occupied in their labours; and whoſe talk is of their bullocks; who give their mind to make furrows, and are diligent to give the kine fodder.* Theſe are above the reach of *the ſmith who ſitteth by the Anvil, and conſidereth the iron-work; the vapour of the fire waſteth his fleſh, and he fighteth with the heat of the furnace: the*

*noiſe of the hammer and the anvil is ever in his ears, and his eyes look ſtill upon the pattern of the thing he maketh.* Vulgar and undiſciplined minds are not capable of ſuch noble principles, and worthy inclinations.

If we indulge our furious and intemperate appetites, and blind and impotent paſſions; if we are apt to pick quarrels, and delight in feuds and broils, if we allow our ſelves to rail and give ill language; if we are rude and ſaucy in our behaviour towards others, or practiſe any of the mean arts and methods of detraction: we baſely unman and degrade our ſelves, and offer an affront to that liberal education which hath been beſtowed upon us, and equal our ſelves to the vulgar rout: for where are ſuch qualities as theſe to be found but amongſt clowns and beggars, amongſt the ſavage and unbred? Such accompliſhments as theſe befit onely hoſtlers and porters: they are moſt highly diſtaſtfull to all company, and productive of averſation and diſreſpect. In a word, if you would excell others in point of true worth and excellency, endeavour to get your ſouls poſ-

ſeſſed

ſeſſed with this divine grace of charity, which is the onely thing that doth truly ennoble a man, that doth exalt and dignify his nature, and raiſe him above the reſt of his fellow-creatures.

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A SER-

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# A SERMON

Preached at

*WHITE-HALL.*

## The Seventh Sermon.

NUMB. XXIII. 10.

*—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

I Shall not now trouble you with enquiring into the ſtrict meaning of theſe words, as uttered by the Prophet *Balaam*; but I ſhall conſider them onely as they are commonly underſtood, *viz.*

*viz.* as containing in them the ſecret wiſh and deſire of moſt wicked and ungodly men; who, though they are loth to be at the pains of *living* the *life*, yet would fain *die* the *death* of the *righteous*, and would gladly that *their latter end* ſhould be *like his*. As well as men love their ſins, yet they would not willingly be damned for them. They can't endure to think ſeriouſly of paſſing out of this World in an impenitent ſtate. For it is what but a very few can arrive unto, wholly to ſhake off, or wear out all ſenſe of good and evil, of reward and puniſhment. The fears of another World will ever and anon be ſtirring and crowding themſelves in, and will fret and gall the Sinner ſorely, and make his thoughts troubleſome to him. An uneaſie bed, a broken ſleep, a ſudden affliction, an *hand-writing on the wall*, will ſometimes force us, whether we will or no, to ſmite upon our breaſts, and reflect ſadly upon our paſt diſhonourable miſdeeds and the fatal iſſue of them; and very often our own conſcience will fly in our face, notwithſtanding all our arts to divert it, or our charms to lull it aſleep; nor could a wicked man ever be at quiet in

in his mind, but that he is reſolved by God's grace, when time ſhall ſerve, to doe ſomething or other, he doth not well know what or when, whereby he may obtain pardon for all the follies and miſcarriages of his life paſt.

I am very confident I now repreſent to you the ſecret mind of moſt wicked Chriſtians who at any time think ſeriouſly, *viz.* that that which makes them ſo hardy and ſtupidly neglectfull of their immortal concerns, and ſo jocund and pleaſant whilſt they live in plain known ſins, is this, that they promiſe themſelves, and depend on God's goodneſs for time and opportunity of making amends in a lingring ſickneſs, or in a declining age. They are now young and healthfull, ſtrong and luſty, their pulſe beats evenly, their bloud moves briskly, their ſpirits are active and ſubtile, and they feel no ſymptoms of any approaching ſickneſs. Hereafter therefore they think it will be time enough to look after another life, when they ſhall be nigh leaving this, when their bodies ſhall begin to decline, and their ſtrength to decay, and death ſhall make its approaches.

Thus

Thus there are as it were two ways propounded to Heaven; one, (and that is counted a very dull, tedious and difficult paſſage,) by the conſtant doing of good, by *living righteouſly and godlily and ſoberly in this preſent world.* The other, (which is a ſhorter cut, and a much broader way;) by repenting at our death of a wicked life: and it is not at all hard to gueſs which way the greateſt part of men will chuſe.

And would this doe, it were indeed a very fine and ſubtile management of things: for thus we might ſwallow the bait, and never be hurt by the hook: we might have both the pleaſure of being wicked, and the hopes of being ſaved. We might ſpare our ſelves all the trouble of Religion, and yet not miſs of the reward of it. We might ſpend all our days as we liſt, gratify every vain humour and appetite, enjoy this world as much as we can, deny our ſelves nothing that our luſts and paſſions crave, live all our life long without God in the world, and yet at laſt die in the Lord.

The

The great enemy of mankind hath not in all his magazine a more deadly engine for the deſtruction of ſouls. Nor is there any thing I know of, that doth ſo notoriouſly fruſtrate and defeat the whole deſign of our Saviour's coming into the world, and render our Chriſtianity ſo uſeleſs to us, as this one preſumption, that the whole of Religion, or all that is neceſſary to ſalvation, may be performed upon a ſick or death-bed. For if it may be done as well at the laſt, in good truth what need we trouble our ſelves about it ſooner? what need we diſquiet our ſelves in vain about the exerciſes of vertue and piety, or forego the ſweet pleaſures of this life, or conſtantly maintain a painfull and ungratefull conflict with the inclinations and inordinate cravings of our fleſh, or renounce our ſecular intereſts, or undertake a ſharp and troubleſome ſervice, whenas it is but at any time lamenting over our ſins, and truſting to the performances of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and we ſhall be as ſecure of Paradiſe, as if we had all our days *kept a conſcience void of offence both towards God, and towards all men*? and in ſo doing ſhall run no other hazard

hazard but that of dying ſuddenly, which doth not happen to one man in five hundred.

Eternal bliſs and happineſs is a thing of ſo very great and weighty conſideration, of ſuch vaſt moment to us, that to put off the thoughts thereof, or proviſion for it, but one day (after that we are become capable of thinking and acting like men) is certainly a very great and unaccountable indiſcretion; but for a man to give all his days to himſelf, and to his own pleaſure and humour, and to reſerve for God, for whoſe ſervice he was born, but one, and that the worſt and the laſt, This is ſurely madneſs beyond all meaſure.

The extreme folly and danger of ſuch practices I ſhall now indeavour to evince, by ſhewing briefly theſe three things.

I. How little all that amounts to which can be done by a wicked man in order to the obtaining the pardon of his ſins on a ſick or death-bed.

II. How

II. How far ſhort all this comes of what the holy Scriptures require as the indiſpenſable conditions of ſalvation.

III. What ſmall hopes or encouragement God hath any where given men to believe that he will at all abate or remit of thoſe conditions he hath propounded in the Goſpel, or accept of any thing leſs than a good life.

I. How little all that amounts to which can be done by a wicked man on his ſick or death-bed. Now ſome at this time can doe more, ſome leſs, according as God affords them ſpace and ability; but ordinarily the whole of a death-bed repentance is no more than a few good words and wiſhes, a ſuperficial confeſſion of ſin and wickedneſs in general, ſome broken prayers and pious expreſſions to the Miniſter, (who then ſhall be ſure to be ſent for in all haſte, however deſpiſed by the ſinner all his life-time before) and perhaps receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, (which he never thought of, nor ever would trouble himſelf about whilſt he was well and in health,) toge-

ther with a legacy of his ill-gotten goods to charitable uſes; and this in common eſteem is making a good Chriſtian end; and ſuch an ones condition, whatever his life hath been, is thought fair and hopefull.

But I am willing in the handling of this ſubject to allow to the dying penitent all the advantages imaginable, and to conſider his repentance in the beſt circumſtances, and therefore I ſhall not inſtance in ſuch as are violently ſnatch'd and ſuddenly hurried out of the world in the midſt of their wickedneſs, and have hardly time ſo much as to beg mercy at God's hands; nor yet in thoſe who are taken with ſuch diſeaſes as render them uncapable of any wiſe or rational thoughts, though this is a caſe that often happens in the world; for there is many a man who intends when he comes to die to repent, that is, to call to mind all his wicked ways, and to be extremely ſorrowfull for them, and at laſt it proves that his ſickneſs is of that ſort as utterly to take away all his memory and underſtanding: and when he is to look back, and ſeriouſly to conſider how he has li-

ved,

ved, alas! he remembers not one thing good or bad that he ever ſaid or did. He has pitched upon and fixed a time wherein to fit himſelf for another world, and for his long home; and when that time is come, his diſtemper proves ſuch, that he knows nothing of his going, or that he is now upon his journey. And as he lived like a fool all his life long, ſo now when he deſigned to die very piouſly and wiſely, perhaps he dies raving mad. But I ſhall omit theſe and the like conſiderations, (though indeed all thoſe who are ſo daring and intolerably ventureſome as abſolutely to reſolve to continue in all ungodlineſs till they come to die, ought reaſonably to expect that God ſhould in his juſtice cut them off without allowing them either the opportunity or means of repentance:) and inſtead thereof ſhall rather put the caſe of one who dies leiſurely and by degrees, who retains his memory and underſtanding to the laſt, and is able in ſome meaſure to reckon up and recount all his former wickedneſſes; and I ſhall conſider what ſuch an one can doe towards the ſecuring his everlaſting ſalvation.

1. He may be moſt paſſionately ſorrowfull for what he hath done amiſs, ſo that the remembrance of his evil ways may become very bitter and grievous to him, but yet it is hard to think for all this that his mind ſhould on a ſudden be really altered; for I ſpeak now of ſuch as have all along pleaſed and delighted themſelves in ſin and vanity, who have fortified themſelves with all the arguments for vice and irreligion, who have cheriſhed the moſt contemptible thoughts of, and hated nothing ſo much as piety and vertue; now is it likely that of a ſudden ſuch mens judgments and opinions concerning the worth, value and goodneſs of things ſhould be ſo wonderfully changed, that they ſhould be able ſo immediately to lay aſide all their former prejudices againſt the rules of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, and to be reconciled in a moment to what they have ſo long declared open enmity againſt? that juſt a little before they die they ſhould become as abſolutely of another mind, and as clearly of another perſuaſion as if they were in truth other men? It argues greater command over our ſelves than

than we ſhould now find, ſhould we try the ſame thing, for a man to think, believe judge and act quite contrary to what he hath thought, believed and done for forty, or fifty, or ſixty years: ſo that in truth this grief and ſorrow that now poſſeſſes the dying penitent, is no other than that of every common malefactour who when he is ready to receive that puniſhment which he hath deſerved, is then very angry and diſpleaſed with himſelf for what he hath done, and yet were he ſet free, would not ſtick, the next fair opportunity, to commit the ſame crime again that he is now condemned for; he is ſorry not that he ſinned, but that he cannot eſcape ſuffering for it; it troubleth him not ſo much that he hath been ſo evil, as that he fears God will prove juſt and true to his word; it wounds him to the heart to think that he can now ſin no longer, that all the pleaſure of it is paſt, and that nothing now remains but a ſad reckoning and account; but yet he could ſtill applaud himſelf in the remembrance of his former extravagancies, were he ſure that God would forget them; ſo that it is no thanks to wicked men though they are mightily confounded at the ſenſe

of their guilt when they come to die, and ſee hell gaping before them juſt ready to devour them; thoſe fears and horrours that they at ſuch times feel, are very often but ſome flaſhes of thoſe flames that are juſt ready to catch hold of them; and if ſuch a ſorrow be repentance, they ſhall then ſadly repent to all eternity.

2. If the dying penitent proceeds ſtill farther, moſt earneſtly and affectionately to beg God's pardon for the ſake of *Chriſt Jeſus*, pleading his merits and ſatisfaction; *what doe they but mock God*, (to uſe the words of a great Scholar and Courtier) *who think it enough to ask him forgiveneſs with the remainder and laſt drawing of a malitious breath? for what doe they otherwiſe, that die this kind of well dying, but ſay unto God, we beſeech thee, O Lord, that all the falſhood, forſwearing and treacheries of our life paſt may be pleaſing to thee, and acceptable in thy ſight, that thou wilt for our ſakes (who have had no leiſure to doe any thing for thine) change thy nature, and forget to be a juſt God, that thou wouldeſt love injuries and oppreſſions, call ambition wiſedom, and charity fooliſhneſs; certainly,* (as

(as he concludes) *they who depend upon ſuch prayers have either found out a new God or made one.* Nay,

3. Should he back his prayers with reſtitution of all that he hath gotten unjuſtly, and with charity to the poor, and forgiveneſs of all the injuries he hath received from other men; theſe indeed had been excellent beginnings of a new life, had they been done in time, but what vertue or praiſe can there be in reſtoring that which we cannot poſſibly detain any longer? in giving away that which we muſt neceſſarily part with? and as for pardoning injuries received, alas! what is all this when we ſpeak of wicked and unreaſonable men, who in their life time take preſent pay, immediate revenge? ſuch people talk of forgiving injuries, whenas there is not one injury done to them that they have not a great while agoe fully returned, there is nothing behind hand or due to them, in that kind; they have had the ſpite and all the pleaſure of revenge already, and now after that they would freely forgive and die in charity.

4. Laſtly, The utmoſt and greateſt thing that the ſick or dying ſinner can doe is to make ſtrong, and as to his preſent meaning, moſt ſincere reſolutions againſt his former evil courſes, and walking in all vertue and godlineſs, ſhould God continue his life; and this is that which men uſually truſt unto in this extremity, they hope God will accept of the will for the deed, and that ſuch unfeigned reſolutions ſhall paſs for repentance.

Now here I would deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider, that there is nothing in the world more eaſie than to reſolve well, eſpecially when we are under any fear or fright, that there is not any thing, however difficult or ungrateſull, or even impoſſible, that men will not readily promiſe to perform if thereby they may but deliver themſelves from a preſſing and imminent danger; for our minds being then wholly prepoſſeſt with the great ſenſe of the danger we are in, we weigh not at all the difficulties or inconveniences of what at ſuch a time we undertake or engage our ſelves to doe; but yet how hard do we by daily experience find

it

it to keep close and constant to those religious resolutions which we make even in the time of our health and vigour, and that upon the most serious deliberation? And how many have we known in the world, who when they lay on their sick beds, and were under the fears and apprehensions of death have by the most solemn vows, and those no doubt as to the present sense of their minds, sincere, obliged themselves to walk in better ways, and professed that they desired to live for no other end but onely to testifie the reality of their intentions by their future obedience; who yet, as soon as ever they have been restored to health, have presently *returned like the dog to the vomit, or the sow to the wallowing in the mire?* Then is the time of making good and lasting resolutions of living well, when we can examine indifferently, and determine impartially, when our judgments are good, and our passions are quiet; but all the purposes of sick men are most commonly like the vows of a mariner in a great tempest, which vanish away and are forgotten upon the clearing of the Skie and altering of the weather; their mind changes with

their

their bloud, and varies with their pulſe, and all their good purpoſes are purged away with the dregs of their diſtemper. And thus it is eaſie to obſerve that the ungodly man's reſolutions are juſt according to the degrees of danger that he is in; ſo long as there are brisk hopes of recovery, his intentions of amendment are weak and ſlender, but as death comes nigher and nigher, his reſolutions increaſe and get ſtrength, and when at laſt he ſees it is very unlikely he ſhould live any longer, then he reſolves ſoundly and ſtoutly to live better; the plain meaning of which is this, he promiſes and vows to doe that which according to his own fears and opinion is impoſſible to be done; and can we think that God will accept of a purpoſe, (let it be never ſo ſincere) of living well, which is founded upon no other conſideration or motive but onely this, that I verily believe my life is now all done? a reſolution that is ſo far from being likely to hold, that it is moſt reaſonable it ſhould not; for if I once am likely to live longer, the reaſons why I thus reſolved do then ceaſe, and I may upon as good grounds, and with as great ſecurity as ever go on in my former ſins.

But

But farther, the dying man reſolves to leave all his ſins, but, alas, they are not ſo eaſily parted with! he hath entertained and cheriſhed them for a long time, and they are not now ſo quickly to be rooted out; for it takes even good men many months and years, a great part of their time ſpent in moſt hearty and frequent begging the divine aſſiſtence, and in calling together all the arguments imaginable, and uſing their utmoſt ſtrength of mind to conquer and ſubdue but ſome one unreaſonable paſſion or deſire; and wicked men in their life time complain enough of the difficulty of this; what more common with them than to ſay that it is impoſſible to reſiſt the allurements of good company, or the charms of beauty, or the temptations of gain and honour? nay, do they not often try to excuſe themſelves in many ſins, by pleading that they are ſo uſed to them that they cannot poſſibly leave them? as for inſtance, that they ſwear before ever they think of it, that they can't keep down their paſſion when provoked, that they have tried to break off ſome lewd cuſtomes, and have prevailed for a while,

but

but that then they have returned upon them with greater violence, and yet now when they come to die how eaſie is all this? a good reſolution and a few prayers ſhall doe all this great work in a trice, and an hour or a day ſhall vanquiſh all ſin in general, and at once, ſo as that the man ſhall become fitted to ſtand before God.

When therefore men make ſuch reſolutions of amendment, they reſolve they know not what, for it is a work of great time and patience, it requires long conſideration, aſſiduous watchfulneſs and unwearied diligence, to extirpate thoſe inveterate habits which by a long wicked life we have contracted, and to mortifie thoſe luſts that have been ſo long uſed to tyrannize and domineer over us; this muſt be done by degrees and ſucceſſively, by firſt conquering one vice, then another; there is very little truſt or heed therefore to be given to ſuch haſty reſolves, violently extorted from us by a great and preſent fear; and after all let them be never ſo honeſt and ſtrong, yet ſtill there is a great difference between doing a thing, and onely reſolving in our minds

to

to doe it, and why ſhould that be thought ſufficient to ſave us at the laſt gaſp, which all grant is not ſufficient to put us into a ſtate of ſalvation whilſt we continue well and in health? But wiſhes and purpoſes made in the time of our life and ſtrength do not alone make a bad man good, why then ſhould they alone be ſufficient on our death-bed? in a word, a man that profeſſeth himſelf a ſcholar, but who hath ſpent all his days in idleneſs, and made no improvement of his mind or reaſon, and onely at laſt reſolves to ſtudy hard, ſhould God ſpare his life, may as well and properly be ſaid to have died a learned man, as one who being by profeſſion Chriſt's diſciple hath lived wickedly and unworthily all his days, and onely at laſt juſt before he dies reſolves to amend his life, can ever on that account be thought to have paſſed out of this world a good Chriſtian. Which leads me to the ſecond thing.

II. To conſider how far ſhort all this comes of what the holy Scriptures require as the indiſpenſable conditions of ſalvation; for ſhould all this that I have now rehearſed, and whatever elſe can be added

ded to it which a wicked man may doe upon his death-bed, ſhould it all amount to repentance, yet where in the mean time is obedience to all the laws of the Goſpel?

As for thoſe indeed who in the ſincerity of their heart have done God's will, their repentance ſhall be accepted for what they have fallen ſhort in, or thoſe few things they have miſcarried and tranſgreſſed in, and which the beſt of us all have need to lament over; but I cannot think that a ſhort repentance at laſt was ever intended to anſwer for an univerſal diſobedience and a whole life of wickedneſs; for repentance from dead works and reſolutions of a godly life, are required as a preparative for Chriſtianity, and are therefore accounted neceſſary in adult perſons even before their Baptiſm; but then by our Chriſtian profeſſion, which we take upon us in Baptiſm, we are obliged to more, *viz.* to a new life and all manner of purity and righteouſneſs; and therefore to hope to be happy in another world without living well here is againſt our own very bargain, and that agreement and covenant which we made with

with God in our baptiſm, wherein we expreſly promiſed to walk in God's holy Commandments all our days: and therefore this keeping God's commands muſt be as neceſſary for the obtaining the reward, as ſorrow for, or forſaking of our ſins.

This I ſhall illuſtrate briefly thus. The ways of vertue and righteouſneſs, and of ſin and wickedneſs, are not like two roads that lie nigh or parallel one to the other, ſo that with eaſe, and in a little time, a man may ſtep out of one into the other; but they are perfectly oppoſite, and directly contrary to each other. Suppoſe that a man for a great reward be obliged in one day, between Sun-riſing and Sun-ſetting, to travel ſo many miles Northward, and moreover by a ſolemn oath (as all Chriſtians are to the practice of Chriſtianity) engaged to the performance of it; but that the man freely preſuming he hath time enough to doe this in, doth not ſet out at the firſt riſing of the Sun, but loiters and trifles away all his time; nay, not onely ſo, but that for his pleaſure, or ſome little convenience, he travels the quite contrary way, and goes

goes Southward; and finding that road very ſmooth, broad, and full of company and diverſion, is by any little temptations drill'd on ſtill farther in it, wholly forgetting his bargain; till on a ſudden the Sun is juſt ready to ſet, night comes on a-pace, and then the wretch begins to conſider how much he is out of his way, and finds himſelf weary and tired, and unfit for travel, and curſeth his own folly, and promiſeth if he were to begin again, he would go directly to the place commanded; but by that time he hath thus reſolved, the Sun is ſet, ſhall this man now obtain the promiſed reward? Alas! before he can challenge that, he muſt firſt return back all the way he hath gone, even to the point from whence he firſt ſet out, and alſo after that will have his whole days journey ſtill to go, and all that task to doe which he at firſt engaged himſelf to perform; ſo a wicked man upon his death-bed is not onely to unravel all his former works, to break off all his lewd cuſtoms, to mortify all his fooliſh paſſions and unruly luſts, to forſake all his deadly ſins, and to repent of his paſt ill-ſpent life, but he is then to live a new life, he is then to accuſtome himſelf to the

the practice of goodneſs, and to make it habitual to him; his mind is then to be furniſhed with all Chriſtian vertues and graces, he hath his whole race ſtill to run, and his ſalvation ſtill to work out; and is the leaſt part of this poſſible to be done on a languiſhing bed of ſickneſs?

Had we made Religion the buſineſs of our whole lives, and in every thing exerciſed our ſelves to keep a conſcience unblameable; yet at ſuch a time, when we come to die, we ſhould find work and duty enough to employ us to the utmoſt: To manage our ſelves well and decently and as becomes Chriſtians in ſuch a condition, patiently to bear our affliction, chearfully to ſubmit to God's will, to beg pardon of our manifold failings and miſcarriages, readily to leave this world, and all that is dear to us in it, at his call: theſe and many other are the exerciſes of a Chriſtian on the bed of ſickneſs. And how few are there in thoſe agonies that are able to bear up with any tolerable manhood or courage? and therefore we do not ordinarily account him a wiſe man that will leave ſo much as his

worldly affairs then to be ſetled. How then, beſides taking care of all theſe things at a time, when our very natural powers and faculties are diſabled, when our bodies are full of pain, and our minds full of diſtractions and perplexities, ſhall we be able alſo to doe all that work, for which our wholé life is little enough, and for which alone we were born into this world? and this the Devil ſubtilly foreſees, that if he can but prevail with men to put off the care of Religion till a ſick bed, he ſhall find othergeſs employment for them then. He will not fail to be preſent at ſuch an opportunity; and as before in their life-time he told them it was too ſoon, ſo now he will himſelf ſuggeſt to them that it is too late to repent and turn to God.

Ye therefore that are apt to defer your repentance till a death-bed, condeſcend ſometimes to viſit your ſick neighbours and friends: look on their condition when they lie on their dying bed; and by it judge whether that be a fit time to doe ſo great a work in; ſee how troubled and diſturbed their thoughts are, how uneaſie and diſtempered their minds are as well

as

as their bodies, how faſt their reaſon and underſtanding decays, how their memories are loſt, and their ſenſes fail them, and they cannot in the leaſt help themſelves. Is this a time, ſay then, to prepare for eternity, to vanquiſh all ſin, and to obtain all grace? is this the fitteſt opportunity we can chuſe, to make our peace with God in, to ſue out our pardon, and to perform all thoſe duties of piety, mercy, juſtice and charity that we were before wanting in; or rather are not they then happy, who at ſuch a time have nothing elſe to doe but to die? would you but take the opinion of thoſe who are themſelves in this condition, and be moved by their judgments, they will all give their ſuffrages for what I have been now proving. Do not they when ſurprized by death offer all their goods and ſubſtance that they have ſo long and vainly laboured and toiled for, for ſome longer time, for a little truce and reſpite? what are they not willing to give, on condition that God would *ſpare* them yet *a little while before they go hence, and be no more ſeen?* Did you ever hear of any dying penitent that did not a thouſand times wiſh he had begun ſooner? and

how earneſtly do ſuch warn every one by their example to take heed of truſting to a death-bed repentance? If therefore he that hath ſerved the luſts of the fleſh, and done his own will during a long malitious life can, for any thing a dying perſon can doe, be in any ſenſe ſaid to have lived ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, then may he be ſure of ſalvation: if we walk according to this rule, then ſhall peace be upon us, but how can a man ſow to the fleſh, and reap to the ſpirit? ſerve the Devil all his life long, and be crowned by God at his death? but

III. The laſt thing to be conſidered was, what hopes or encouragement God hath given us to believe that he will remit or abate of thoſe conditions of a good life which are propounded to us in the Goſpel. And indeed there is very little to be found either of promiſe or example in Scripture to be a ſufficient ground of belief that he will ordinarily accept of a death-bed repentance; for are not the conditions of ſalvation the ſame to perſons ſick and dying, as they are to men alive and in health? Are they not both under the ſame covenant, and is not the ſame

actual

actual obedience required of all under equal penalties? or can we think that any man ſhall fare better, and come off upon eaſier terms; or that God will deal more mildly and gently with him, and accept of leſs from him onely becauſe he hath been ſo hardy and bold as to continue in ſin, and to put off his duty towards God even to the very laſt minute of his life?

But however there are two inſtances commonly mentioned in favour of a death-bed repentance. The firſt is that of the *labourers*, in our Saviour's Parable, *that came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and yet received equal wages with thoſe that came in at the firſt, and had born the heat of the day.* But it is here to be obſerved,

1. That theſe *labourers* who came in ſo late, yet came in as ſoon as ever they were called and invited; for they gave this reaſon why they had ſtood ſo long there idle, *becauſe no man hath hired us.* Had they been often ſolicited by the Maſter, or his Servants, and offered work, and all the day refuſed, and onely

then at laſt, juſt in the cloſe of the evening, been willing to have taken upon themſelves the ſervice when it was over, this had been ſomething like the caſe I have been now ſpeaking of, of *Chriſtians* all their lives long rejecting *Chriſt*'s yoke, but juſt when they are ſummoned to give an account, willing to ſubmit their necks to it. But this Parable rather repreſents the caſe of an *Heathen man* that never heard of *Chriſt* or his Religion till a little before his death; whoſe coming into the Church ſo late ſhall not therefore hinder his receiving a full reward. But this is by no means the condition of thoſe who have made a covenant with *Chriſt* in baptiſm, and after they have moſt notoriouſly failed of what they promiſed, do then onely return to their ſervice *when the night is come, in which no man can work.* He that came in at the eleventh hour was under no engagement to work any ſooner, he had no-where promiſed it, nor had the Maſter commanded it, and therefore he was without fault.

2. He that came in at the eleventh hour did yet work one hour, that was indeed but a ſhort time, yet however ſufficient

ficient to render his caſe very different from that man's, who comes in but at the twelfth; which is the caſe of the death-bed penitent.

The other inſtance often named in favour of a death-bed repentance, is that of one of the Thieves on the Croſs, a paſſage in the Goſpel, remembred better, and ſtudied more by wicked men, than any other ſtory whatever, though the whole of it was ſo very miraculous and extraordinary, that the like never can be expected again, unleſs our bleſſed Lord ſhould once more deſcend from Heaven, and ſuffer here amongſt us, and one of us ſhould happen to die in company with him; and then indeed from ſuch a wonderfull repentance and faith as his was, we might hope for the like ſucceſs and acceptance. But this example affords but little comfort to thoſe who have for many years profeſſed the Religion of *Jeſus*, and yet deferred the practice of it till the day of their death.

But, you'll ſay then, is there no hopes? is there no remedy? what muſt a wicked man doe in ſuch a condition, when he

happens to be thus surprised by death? I am far from taking upon me to limit and confine the mercies of God Almighty, they are *over all his works*, and are as infinite as himself, such persons therefore as have spent their days in luxury and profaneness, and contempt of all religion, but at last humbly beg pardon, and heartily promise and resolve amendment, we must leave to his goodness, and pity, and gratious compassion, who though he ties us up to rules, yet is not himself bound by them, and who may doe more for us than he hath any where promised, and therefore persons in such circumstances ought to be encouraged and quickned to doe all that they can, and at last to submit themselves to God's good pleasure, and all that we can tell such men is, that the greater and more remarkable their repentance is, the more hopes of their forgiveness; that sometimes there have appeared now and then some illustrious instances of the power of God's grace and spirit, men who have been as famous for their signal repentance as they were before for their profaneness and debauchery, and that where God gives such extraordinary grace in this life, it is to be

hoped

hoped he will ſhew extraordinary favour in the other; ſo that if ſuch men may be ſaved, it is nevertheleſs by way of prerogative, not by the ordinary rule of judgment; it is we know not how.

But yet leſt men ſhould from hence preſume to defer their repentance, thus much muſt, I think, and ought to be ſaid on the other ſide, that God hath no where expreſly declared that he will accept of all our ſorrows, and ſubmiſſions, and tears, and promiſes, and reſolutions made on a death-bed; that all theſe do not amount to what is the plain condition of the covenant of grace, that though what God may doe is not for us to define, yet he hath plainly enough told us what we are to doe, and that it is the greateſt madneſs in the world to run ſo great an hazard as that we cannot be ſaved without a diſpenſation from the ordinary rule; had a wiſe man an hundred ſouls he would not venture one of them on ſuch uncertainties, and thus the ancient fathers have determined this queſtion, *Do I ſay* (ſaith St. *Auguſtine*) *ſuch an one ſhall be damned? I dare not. Do I ſay he ſhall be ſaved? I cannot. What ſay I then?*

*then? will you free your ſelf from all uncertainty in this matter? Repent now whilſt you are in health; forſake your ſins whilſt you are able to commit them, and then you are ſure of pardon.* There is indeed another Church in the world that can teach men how to be ſaved on a deathbed even without repentance, which hath found out ways to make it not onely poſſible, but very eaſie, for any ungodly wretch to ſecure himſelf from Hell at length when he comes to die by leſs than half an hours work; but *we have not ſo learned Chriſt*, nor dare we be ſo falſe to our truſt, or to the ſouls of men, as to give them certain aſſurance of everlaſting life, on any other terms than a conſtant, habitual obedience to the laws of the Goſpel. The onely certain way to die well is to live well.

Nor ſhall I go about to determine how much of our life muſt be ſpent in the practice of righteouſneſs and goodneſs before we can be ſaid to have lived well; ſince this varies according to the circumſtances of men which are infinite: this is as if a man ſhould ask how long it will be before a fool can become wiſe, or an unlearned

unlearned man a ſcholar, which differs according to the capacity of the man, his induſtry and opportunity, and God's bleſſing; but onely thus much, I think, may ſafely be ſaid, that ſo much time of our life is neceſſary to be ſpent in the practice of goodneſs, as that we may from the temper of our minds and the courſe of our actions be truly denominated, holy, humble, pure, meek, patient, juſt, temperate, lovers of God and men; for the Goſpel promiſeth not eternal life and glory to any but to perſons ſo and ſo qualified, and it is undoubted that a few pious wiſhes, prayers and purpoſes, or a good will made at our death will not ſuffice to denominate us ſuch. God doth not juſt watch how men die, but he will judge every man according to his works, and the deeds he hath done in the fleſh; and thoſe diſpoſitions we have nouriſhed, loved and delighted in all our life will follow and attend us to another world; and an evil nature, however loth we are to it, or ſorry for it, will ſink us down into the deepeſt Hell.

To conclude all, the uſe we are to make of all I have now ſaid, is not to judge or cenſure others whoſe lives we may have been acquainted with, and whoſe condition according to this doctrine may ſeem ſad and deplorable, ſuch we are to pity and pray for, and exerciſe our charity upon, and leave to God's mercy; but that we ſhould all now reſolve not to defer the doing of the leaſt thing that we could wiſh done in order to the ſalvation of our ſouls, to a ſick or death-bed, but that to day, even whilſt it is called to day, we depart from iniquity, and not be always beginning to live; we ought not to loſe ſo much time as it would take to deliberate about this matter, for there is no room for conſultation here; he would be next to mad that ſhould ſeriouſly adviſe whether he ſhould be for ever happy or for ever miſerable.

Let us all endeavour therefore ſo to live now as we ſhall wiſh we had done when we come to lie upon our death-beds, or as we ſhall then reſolve to live, in caſe God ſhould continue our life to us, let

let us purſue thoſe things now, which we ſhall be able to think of and reflect upon with pleaſure when we come to die, and preſently forſake all thoſe things the remembrance of which at that time will be bitter to us; let us now whilſt we are well and in health cheriſh the ſame thoughts and apprehenſions of things, that we ſhall have when we are ſick and dying; let us now deſpiſe this world as much, and think as ill of ſin, and as ſeriouſly of God and eternity as we ſhall then do, for this is the great commendation of the righteous man that every one deſires to die his death, that at laſt all men are of his mind and perſuaſion, and would chuſe his condition; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

I end all with thoſe words of the wiſe Son of *Sirach*. *Learn before thou ſpeak, and uſe phyſick or ever thou be ſick; before judgment examine thy ſelf, and in the day of viſitation thou ſhalt find mercy. Humble thy ſelf before thou be ſick, and in the time of ſins ſhew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not untill death to be juſtified.*

*Make*

*Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put it not off from day to day; for ſuddenly ſhall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtroyed, and periſh in the day of vengeance.*

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A SER-

# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

### The Eighth Sermon.

St. MATTH. V. 34.

*But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all.*

FOR our more clearly underſtanding the ſenſe and extent of this prohibition of our bleſſed Saviour's, *Swear not at all*, theſe two things muſt be obſerved.

I. That

I. That it was a common practice amongſt the *Jews* to ſwear by ſome of God's creatures, which cuſtome prevailed amongſt them from a pretended reverence of God's holy name: whenever they would affirm any thing with more than ordinary vehemence and earneſtneſs, or beget an aſſurance of what they ſaid in another, they thought it not fit or decent preſently to invoke the ſovereign God of Heaven and earth, and on every ſlight and trivial occaſion to run to the great maker and father of all things; but in ſmaller matters and in ordinary talk they would ſwear by their *Parents*, by the *Heavens*, by the *Earth*, by *Jeruſalem*, the *Altar*, *Temple*, their *Head*, or the like; nor did they count ſuch forms of ſwearing equally obliging with thoſe oaths wherein the name of God was ſolemnly and expreſly called upon: to this our Saviour in probability refers in the verſe foregoing my Text, *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*; they thought ſuch onely incurr'd the guilt and penalty of perjury who ſtood not

not to thoſe promiſes they had confirmed by explicit calling the Lord himſelf to witneſs, but that there was but little evil or danger either in the common uſe of ſwearing by creatures, or in breaking ſuch oaths.

Now our Saviour here abſolutely forbids not onely ſwearing by the ſacred name of God, but alſo by any of his creatures, *Swear not at all*, no not ſo much as *by the Heavens*, *by the Earth*, or *by Jeruſalem*; and the reaſon he gives is becauſe in all ſuch forms of ſwearing by creatures, though God is not expreſly named, yet he himſelf is really referred to, and tacitly invoked, who is the ſupreme Lord and maker of all: when you ſwear by the Heavens you call upon him whoſe throne is there placed, when by the earth you appeal to him whoſe foot-ſtool it is, when by *Jeruſalem* you implicitly and by juſt interpretation ſwear by him that is the great King thereof. This our Saviour as plainly delivers on another occaſion, *Matth.* 23. 20. *Whoſo ſhall ſwear by the altar, ſweareth by it and all things thereon; and whoſo ſhall ſwear by the Temple, ſweareth by it and by him that dwel-*

*leth therein; and he that ſhall ſwear by Heaven, ſweareth by the throne of God and by him that ſitteth thereon.* So that in this caſe, the truth is, if in ſuch kind of oaths, when men ſwear by the Heavens, the Earth or the like, they mean onely the material ſenſible Heavens and Earth, beſides the irreligion of vain ſwearing, they are guilty of plain idolatry, in giving to the creatures that worſhip that is due onely to God; as (ſuppoſing thoſe inanimate beings able to hear them and judge their thoughts, and witneſs to the ſincerity of their purpoſes, or to puniſh them for their falſeneſs and hypocriſie) but if they do not believe any ſuch thing of thoſe creatures they ſwear by, then muſt ſuch oaths, if they have any ſenſe at all, refer to God, and his name muſt be underſtood to be invoked, even though he be not expreſly mentioned: So that this prohibition of our Saviour may be accounted to extend to all ſuch forms of ſpeech amongſt us, as are uſed as oaths (and ſo underſtood) to beget credit to what we ſay, though God be not named; in ſhort, all manner of oaths whether by the Majeſty of God, or any of his creatures, or any words, ſigns

or

or geſtures, which by common cuſtome and interpretation are accounted ſwearing, may be underſtood to be hereby forbidden, as well as direct expreſs ſwearing; for a man may ſwear without ever ſaying a word, if by received uſage ſuch a geſture doth ſignifie our calling God to witneſs; and ſo the forms and outward modes of ſwearing are different in ſeveral Nations, though the reaſon and ſenſe of them be the ſame in all places, whatever words or ſigns are uſed. If therefore ſuch phraſes as theſe, *faith*, *troth*, and many others which I might name, are in ordinary eſteem and practice thought to contain ſomething more than an affirmation, and are uſed and underſtood amongſt us as oaths, they are here forbidden to Chriſtians under this rule of ſwearing not at all, though ſuch words in themſelves have not the force of oaths, nor is God immediately appealed to by them.

II. It is farther here to be obſerved, that though all manner of ſwearing whether by the name of God or any of his creatures be thus prohibited, *Swear not at all*, yet this muſt be underſtood onely

of arbitrary voluntary ſwearing in ordinary talk and diſcourſe, when there is no great reaſon, no juſtifiable occaſion for it. It is to be acknowledged that ſome of the ancient Fathers from theſe words did conclude it utterly unlawfull for a Chriſtian at any time to ſwear; ſome of their ſayings to this purpoſe are quoted by *Grotius* in his comment upon theſe words; but then it is to be conſidered,

1. That there were but ſome few of them of this opinion, and that againſt the current doctrine of the greateſt part of the primitive Chriſtians; and,

2. Againſt the known allowed practice amongſt them; for we all along find there were many Chriſtians in the armies of the heathen Emperours, and they could not have ſerved under them without taking the military oath, which they did not uſe to ſcruple, ſo they were not put to ſwear by any of their *Genii*, or *Heathen Deities*, or *Fortune*, or the like.

3. Their great argument againſt taking of oaths was drawn from the invincible faith and truth of Chriſtians, who upon

upon no conſideration whatever could either be forc'd or won to affirm what they knew to be falſe, or promiſe what they never intended to perform; and this they were ſo remarkable for, that they thought it a diminution or ſcandalous affront offered to them to be put to their oaths; they always had ſuch a regard to their words, and it was ſo ſacred a thing at all times to ſpeak truth, that they would not be ſo much diſtruſted or diſparaged as to have the ſecurity of an oath required of them; the conſtant tenour of their lives they thought did bear a greater teſtimony to what the Chriſtians affirmed, and render it more credible than the oaths of any other men could what they witneſſed.

But now becauſe in latter days ſome *Sectaries* both here and elſewhere have from theſe words, *Swear not at all*, pleaded againſt the lawfulneſs of taking of any oaths though thereto required by the Magiſtrate, though it be an oath of Allegiance to their Prince, or when they give teſtimony in a publick cauſe: I ſhall briefly and plainly make out to you that this prohibition of our Saviour's muſt ad-

mit of ſome exceptions, and muſt be reſtrained onely to vain and raſh oaths in our ordinary diſcourſe, which I ſhall doe by deſiring you to conſider,

(1.) That in other general prohibitions it is acknowledged by all that we muſt make the ſame or like exceptions. Thus though our Saviour hath ſaid a little before theſe words in this Sermon on the Mount, v. 21. *Thou ſhalt not kill, and whoſoever ſhall kill ſhall be in danger of the judgment*, yet we all grant that this muſt be confined to private perſons, that this forbids not the Magiſtrate's inflicting capital puniſhments; and then that as to private perſons, it is meant onely of killing innocent men; but that ſtill it is lawfull for us in the preſervation of our own lives to kill thoſe who unjuſtly aſſault us, theſe caſes muſt be reſerved: ſo here, *Swear not at all*, that is, not of your own motion, without any neceſſary or ſufficient cauſe; but this doth not infringe the right which Magiſtrates have to impoſe oaths on their ſubjects, and to require the utmoſt and greateſt ſecurity for their fidelity and obedience; this doth not forbid ſwearing when it is requiſite for the deter-

determining of important controverſies or diſtribution of juſtice, when it is for the publick good, that our teſtimony ſhould be credited and made more valid by the ſolemnity of an oath. And that ſuch exceptions as theſe muſt be allowed from this general rule will appear,

2. If we conſider the poſitive command that is oppoſed to this prohibition, *Swear not at all, but let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of evil. Let your communication, i. e.* your ſpeech, your ordinary familiar diſcourſe, *be yea, yea; nay, nay:* which was a proverbial way of expreſſing an honeſt man whom you may believe and truſt. *Juſtorum etiam eſt etiam, & non eorum eſt non: His aye was aye, and his no was no.* His promiſes and performances did exactly and conſtantly agree: without any more adoe you may give credit to, and relie upon whatever he ſays. *Whatever is more than theſe, cometh of evil*; i. e. whatſoever is more than bare affirming or denying any thing, (that is ſtill in our communication, in our ordinary talk and diſcourſe) is from *evil*; from mens

ſo commonly breaking of promiſes, and ſpeaking of falſities; from whence that lewd cuſtome of adding oaths proceeds, becauſe they cannot be believed without them. Now therefore ſince our Saviour is here directing us how to govern our common diſcourſe and converſation together, the prohibition alſo in the beginning muſt be reſtrained to the ſame matter, and ſo the full ſenſe of the words ſeems to me to be this. In your *communication, familiari ſermone,* in your common talk uſe no ſwearing, not ſo much as by any creature; but let it ſuffice barely to affirm or deny, and be always ſo true to your words, that nothing farther need be deſired or expected from you: all other confirmation in ſuch ordinary affairs is practiſed onely by ſuch as are uſed to lie and diſſemble, and intend to impoſe upon others.

(3.) That our Saviour did not here forbid all ſwearing, whatever cauſe there might be for it, as a thing in it ſelf unlawfull, we are fully ſatisfied from the example of St. *Paul*, who certainly underſtood his Maſter's mind in this particular. Now it is a very unreaſonable thing

thing to imagine, that he ſhould ſo often ſwear, and that by the name of God too, that ſuch his oaths ſhould be recorded in the Scriptures, and that there ſhould not be the leaſt intimation of his ſinning in ſo doing, if all ſwearing was utterly prohibited by his Lord and Maſter. I ſhall propound two or three eminent inſtances to ſhew, that in ſerious and great matters of mighty concernment he made no ſcruple of adding the confirmation of an oath; Gal. 1. 20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not.* He bears witneſs to the truth of his writings by an expreſs oath; *Rom.* 1. 9. *For God is my witneſs whom I ſerve, that without ceaſing I make mention of you always in my prayers.* It was of great moment that in the beginning of his Epiſtle he ſhould perſuade thoſe, to whom he did addreſs himſelf, of his good-will toward them. How well therefore he did wiſh them, he calls God to witneſs, which is the formal eſſence of an oath. Thus again, to name no more, 2 *Cor.* 11. 31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which is bleſſed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not:* which is a plain appeal to God's teſtimony. So that when the glory of God and

and the publick good was engaged, he thought it not unlawfull to invoke God's holy name, and to call his Majeſty for a witneſs of his truth, or the avenger of his falſhood. Thus *our bleſſed Saviour* himſelf when he ſtood before the *High-prieſt* of the *Jews*, did not refuſe to anſwer upon oath; *Matth.* 26. 63. *The High-prieſt ſaid unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God*, which amongſt the *Jews* was the form of giving an oath; to which our Saviour anſwered, *Thou haſt ſaid*; that is, upon my oath it is as thou ſayſt. Nay, to make all ſure, that there is no evil in ſwearing when it is done gravely and ſeriouſly, and upon an important occaſion that requires it; we find that God himſelf hath been pleaſed to give us his oath. *Though it were impoſſible for him to lye, yet that we might have ſtrong conſolation and full aſſurance, to ſhew the heirs of the promiſe the immutability of his counſel, he confirmed it by an oath; and when he could not ſwear by a greater, he ſwore by himſelf*; *Heb.* 6. 13. And therefore it muſt be very abſurd to deny amongſt *Chriſtians* the lawfulneſs of doing that, though upon never

never ſo great reaſon, which St. *Paul* ſo often did, nay which *God Almighty*, who is truth it ſelf, did yet vouchſafe out of condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, to doe more than once. Not now to mention *Baptiſm* and the *Lord's Supper*, both of which have in them the nature of oaths, and are therefore called *Sacraments*.

(4.) We are to conſider that ſwearing rightly circumſtanced is ſo far from being a thing in it ſelf evil, and ſo univerſally forbidden; that it is indeed a moſt eminent part of religious worſhip and divine adoration, by which we do moſt ſignally own and recognize God Almighty to be the great Sovereign Lord and Governour of the world, the higheſt and ſupremeſt Power, to which the laſt and final appeal is in all caſes to be made. By it we acknowledge the immenſity of his preſence, his exact knowledge and continual care of humane affairs, and all things that happen here below; his all-ſeeing eye, that he ſearcheth into the depth of our hearts, and is conſcious to our moſt inward thoughts and ſecret meanings. We do by it avow him as the grand Patron of truth and innocence, as the

the ſevere puniſher and avenger of deceit and perfidiouſneſs. And therefore doth God often in holy Scripture appropriate this to himſelf; *Him onely ſhalt thou ſerve, and to him ſhalt thou cleave, and ſhalt ſwear by his name.* And if this be done with that conſideration and ſolemnity which doth become ſuch a ſpecial part of devotion; upon an occaſion that doth deſerve, and that will in ſome meaſure excuſe our engaging the divine Majeſty as a witneſs in it; I ſay, if it be performed with due awe and reverence, with hearty intention for a conſiderable good, we do, thus calling upon God when we ſwear by him, honour and glorify his great and holy name, as well as by prayer or praiſes, or any other act of religious worſhip whatever.

(5.) Add to this the neceſſity of taking oaths in order to civil government, publick adminiſtration of juſtice, and the maintaining of good order and peace in Societies. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, *Heb.* 6. 16. *That an oath for confirmation to men is the end of all ſtrife*; and that not by particular cuſtoms and laws prevailing in ſome places onely, but from

from the appointment of God, the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of the thing it ſelf, and the conſtant practice of all the world in all ages; for as far and wide as the ſenſe of a Deity hath ſpread it ſelf, hath alſo the religion of an oath, and the final determination of matters in difference, by calling to witneſs the Lord and Maker of all things; this being the utmoſt aſſurance, and the ſureſt pledge any can give of their faith and ſincerity. For nothing can be imagined ſufficient or effectual to engage men to ſpeak truth, or to be faithfull and conſtant to their promiſes, if an oath doth not. He muſt ſurely renounce all ſenſe and fear of God, all conſcience of duty or regard to the Almighty's love and favour, who can with open face call him to teſtify to a lye, or challenge him to puniſh him if he ſpeaks not true, when yet at that very time he knows he does not. This is the greateſt ſecurity men can give of their honeſty, and that they mean as they ſay. And it being neceſſary for the government of the world in ſo many caſes (not proper now to be named) that truth ſhould be found out, and the greateſt certainty of it be given that can poſſibly, and that men

men ſhould by the ſtricteſt ties be obliged to ſome duties; it thence alſo becomes neceſſary that oaths ſhould ſometimes be required, eſpecially when men cannot by other means well aſſure the ſincerity of their intentions, or ſecure the fidelity of their reſolutions.

I confeſs amongſt Chriſtians in the firſt ages I believe oaths were not ſo commonly required in ſuch little matters, as now ſometimes they are, but the reaſon was becauſe truth and honeſty then prevailed far more amongſt them, and lying was then more ſcandalous than, I fear, perjury is now: but perfidiouſneſs and diſſembling, and equivocating and fraud encreaſing, have made the uſe of oaths more ordinary than otherwiſe would have been neceſſary. For if Chriſtians did generally obſerve the laws of their Religion in all other inſtances, men would fly to this greateſt ſecurity onely in extreme and higheſt caſes, and not find it needfull to require it in common and more trivial matters.

(6.) Laſtly, I onely obſerve farther, that what ſeems thus to be the doctrine of

of our Saviour concerning ſwearing, was delivered by the Philoſophers of old amongſt the Heathens as agreeable to the light of nature and right reaſon: that is to ſay, they adviſed their Scholars to forbear all oaths as much as poſſibly they could: never to ſwear but when it was neceſſary, to reverence an oath (as *Pythagoras* expreſs'd it in his golden Verſes) not eaſily or lightly or wantonly to take God's name into their mouths. I forbear to trouble you with the Authours, or the Sentences themſelves: and I propound this onely to ſhew that the wiſe men of this world did agree with our bleſſed Saviour in this rule which he hath preſcribed to us concerning ſwearing; and I have been the larger in it that you might ſee what little reaſon any *Enthuſiaſts* amongſt us have to ſtand out ſo ſtubbornly againſt the wholſome laws of our Countrey, and the proceedings of the Courts of Judicature; who, though it were to ſave the King's life, will not give their teſtimony upon oath, becauſe our Saviour hath ſaid, *Swear not at all.*

The ſum of all is; Our Saviour abſolutely forbids ſwearing in our communi-

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cation or ordinary diſcourſe together, and about the unlawfulneſs of this there is no diſpute; and ſtrange it is that againſt ſuch expreſs words of our bleſſed Lord and Maſter, men ſhould ſo openly allow themſelves in ſuch a vile practice, and yet have the face to call themſelves his diſciples and followers. This evil of voluntary raſh ſwearing hath prevailed amongſt us even almoſt beyond all hope of cure and remedy. That great Oratour St. *Chryſoſtome* made no leſs than twenty Homilies or Sermons againſt this fooliſh vice, and yet found it too hard for all his reaſon or Rhetorick, till at length he attempted to force his Auditours to leave off that ſin, if for no better reaſon, yet that he might chuſe another ſubject. They are ordinarily men onely of debauched minds and conſciences that freely indulge themſelves in it; and if any ſuch now hear me, I cannot expect by thoſe few words I have now to deliver, to diſſuade them from it. I had rather endeavour to offer ſomething to *your* conſideration who are not yet infected by it, to perſuade you to watch ſeverely againſt it, and reſolve never to comply with ſuch an impious ſenſeleſs cuſtome.

1. Con-

1. Conſider what an horrid affront it is to the divine Majeſty. All ſin reflects diſhonourably upon God, but other ſins do this by conſequence onely: this directly flies in his face, and immediately impugneth his juſtice and power. Other ſins are acts of diſobedience, but 'tis high contempt of God, thus to toſs about his excellent and glorious name in our unhallowed mouths, and to proſtitute it to ſo vile an uſe as onely to fill up the vacuities of our idle prattle. That great and terrible name of God which all the Angels and hoſt of Heaven with the profoundeſt ſubmiſſion continually adore; which rends the mountains, and opens the bowels of the deepeſt rocks, which makes hell tremble, and is the ſtrength and hope of all the ends of the earth, our onely refuge in the day of trouble, the very thought whereof ſhould fill all ſober perſons with a reverential awe and horrour, how do men moſt impudently and raſhly almoſt every minute pollute and tear without fear or ſenſe, or obſerving what they ſay, as if God Almighty, the Maker and Judge of us all, were the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable Being in the uni-

verſe? What unaccountable boldneſs and intolerable faucineſs is this, to dare to invoke the dreadfull Majeſty of heaven and earth to witneſs to every impertinent ſaying, ſilly ſtory, vain fancy, almoſt every five words we utter? thus at our pleaſure to ſummon our Omnipotent Creatour, as if he were at our beck, and a ſlave to our humour? thus to play and dally with him who is a conſuming fire, and can in the twinkling of an eye make us all as miſerable as we have been ſinfull? How ſhall we ever be able in the day of our fears to addreſs our ſelves to the throne of his grace, whom every time we ſpeak, we thus madly defy? with what ſhame and regret and confuſion muſt we needs appear before his Judgment-ſeat, whoſe honourable name we have thus foully prophaned and uſed ſo ignominiouſly? Can they ever think to plead that bloud of our deareſt Lord, and thoſe wounds made by the ſpear and nails in his moſt pretious body for the pardon and expiation of their moſt grievous ſins, who thus daily have made a mock of them? Can they ever with the leaſt hope of ſucceſs pray God, when they come to die, to deliver them from that damnation that they

they have a thouſand times before wiſhed to themſelves?

And yet this ſin which argues ſuch ſlight and abuſe of the divine Majeſty, ſuch rudeneſs towards him, and draws ſo many dire conſequences after it, is now adays (pardon me if I ſay it) one of the faſhionable accompliſhments of too many of thoſe that ſhould be precedents of civility or good manners to others; but this is ſo ſad a conſideration that I cannot endure to dwell longer upon it.

I proceed to other miſchiefs of this vice though none need be named after this; for thoſe whom the awe of God and ſenſe of his power and infinite greatneſs will not keep and reſtrain from ſuch deſperate profanations of his holy name, it is not to be imagined that any leſs arguments ſhould.

2. This practice of common ſwearing muſt of neceſſity frequently involve men in the heinous ſin of perjury. He that ſwears at every turn in his ordinary diſcourſe, how often doth he call God to witneſs even to what he knows is falſe, and as

often forget to doe what before God he hath engaged himſelf to perform? or if he be afraid of this crying ſin of perjury, and be put in mind of what by his needleſs oath he had obliged himſelf unto, how many inconveniencies will his raſhneſs continually expoſe him unto? You all know how *Herod* was loth for his honours ſake before all his Court to violate his haſty oath, and how that coſt the head of the greateſt Prophet that ever was. By cuſtomary uſing of God's ſacred name men come to vent it when they think not of it, without any forethought or conſideration, and by it ſwear to things impoſſible or romantick, to their own fictions and dreams which they neither believe themſelves, nor yet intend to deceive others into a belief of; and oftentimes tranſported by anger or rage they ſwear to things they repent of when they are calm and ſober, and are then quite of another mind; ſo that falſe ſwearing is the certain never-failing effect of much ſwearing; nay indeed it is onely chance or luck in ſuch as every time in the hurry of their diſcourſe call upon God's name that they do not, not onely vainly ſwear, but alſo impiouſly forſwear themſelves;

ſelves; for whilſt they thus back almoſt every affirmation with an oath, how idle, uncertain or doubtfull ſoever the matter be, without making any difference, or at all weighing what they ſay, or being ſatisfied concerning the truth of it, or knowing their own minds about it, they cannot be freed from the guilt of the ſin of perjury, though what they ſay ſhould happen not to be falſe, or they ſhould be as good as their word, it being by fortune onely that it doth prove ſo. And he that ſwears to a thing that chances to be true, (if he knew it not certainly, or did not conſider it whether it were ſo or no, but unadviſedly ſealed it with an oath, though it be as he did ſwear) yet muſt be preſumed guilty of this crime of perjury in the ſight of God, and then I leave it to your ſelves to judge how often by this vile cuſtome of ſwearing men do forſwear themſelves.

3. From hence it follows that this ſin of vain and raſh ſwearing in our ordinary diſcourſe is of very bad influence to the publick ſtate; nothing is ſo pernicious to the government, nay nothing is ſo deſtructive of our liberties and properties,

of which we are ſo fond, and for which we are ſo zealous, as this wicked practice of ſwearing upon all occaſions; as it makes oaths become cheap and vile, ſo it derogates from their ſacredneſs and authority, for what reaſon can there be to believe, that he who makes no conſcience of thoſe many oaths that he daily belches forth upon the ſlighteſt provocations, ſhould be of another opinion, and look on himſelf as more ſtrictly tied up by them when he ſwears allegiance to his Prince, or gives his teſtimony in a Court of Judicature? why ſhould he be more afraid or concerned for calling God to witneſs in a cauſe wherein his neighbour's eſtate, good name or life is engaged, than he is in his private converſation of invoking the Majeſty of Heaven an hundred times in a day? The fear of the penalty which the laws have appointed for perjury may indeed move him in ſuch caſes wherein there is danger of his being diſcovered, and there is likewiſe a little more ſolemnity in ſuch publick ſwearing before a Magiſtrate; but yet what is that to one who hath caſt off all ſenſe and fear of God, and every hour dares openly reproach and deſpiſe him? So that the

publick laws ought to provide againſt this piece of debauchery as the bane of all ſociety; and we cannot anſwer it in prudence, to have any intercourſe, to hold any correſpondence or tranſactions with, or in any caſe to truſt or rely on his word who feareth not an oath; for,

4. This practice of ſwearing in our ordinary diſcourſe doth highly detract from the credit of the perſon that uſeth it, it renders juſtly ſuſpicious every word he ſays and confirms with an unneceſſary oath; for if the thing be true and certain, and the perſon of unblemiſhed faith, what need can there be of an oath to vouch it; but if he ſwears to it, he declares himſelf not to be worthy of belief, that his word ought in no caſe to be taken, ſince in the moſt indifferent matters he chuſes ſtill to warrant it with an oath, and by thus doing moſt deſervedly forfeits all credit and repute among conſidering perſons.

A truly honeſt man is ſo well aſſured of his own veracity that he counts it wholly needleſs and uſeleſs to offer an oath as a pledge or pawn of the truth of what he affirms; but if upon every word

I am apt to ſwear to it, this is an undoubted ſign that either I intend to deceive in that particular, or elſe that I am ſo uſed to lie that I cannot expect to be believed without an oath.

5. This is a vice moſt diſtaſtefull and ungratefull to all the reſt of mankind, moſt ſtrangely offenſive to thoſe we converſe with. *The talk of him that ſweareth much*, ſaith a wiſe man, *maketh the hair to ſtand upright, and their brawls make one ſtop his ears.* If men harden themſelves againſt other arguments taken from the wickedneſs and irreligion of this practice, yet this methinks ought to prevail ſomething with thoſe that pretend to honour and gentile carriage, *viz.* that this is the moſt uncivil and the rudeſt thing that can be offered to other men; it rankly favours of ill manners and want of breeding for them to be continually defying of that Being which all other men adore, and ſpitting out their venom againſt that God whom the reſt of mankind profeſs to love and honour above all things. Should one of our hectoring ſwearers come into a company, the greateſt part of which he knew highly valued

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and prized an abſent friend, never mentioned him but with all the kindneſs and reſpect imaginable, called him their patron, profeſſed mighty obligations to him and believed him one of the beſt of men; would it paſs for a thing tolerably becoming or decent for him every word, when no occaſion was offered, to fall abeſpattering and vilifying this perſon, ſo dear to the company, and to ſpeak of him with the greateſt contempt and deſpight? now ſuch is God to the greateſt part of the world, they own all that they have or are to be from him alone, that he is their great benefactour and Saviour, that they are infinitely engaged to him, that they deſire his love and favour above all this world: how is it ſufferable then, in men of faſhion and repute eſpecially, (as is the common practice of too many) when they meet with perſons that are more than others concerned for the honour of God, to be ever and anon with their profane talk pelting this holy being, polluting his name with their filthy ſpeech, outbraving his Majeſty, chuſing to doe that which they know grates moſt harſhly upon other men, and which they hate above any thing in the world?

6. That

6. That which mightily aggravates this madneſs and folly is, that it is ſuch a ſin as we have no temptation to commit, nothing to move or ſway us towards it, it gratifies no natural inclination, it produceth no pleaſure, no gain or worldly profit accrues to us by it; it affordeth us not ſo much as any ſhort temporal recompence for the venture we run, and the dangerous hazards we expoſe our ſelves unto; other ſorts of ſin have ſomething to excuſe them, our natures and bodily tempers may ſtrongly incline us to ſome other ſins: The covetous man hath his full bags and great eſtate to plead in his behalf; and as for the voluptuous Epicure, his appetites and luſts are tickled with the variety of ſenſual delights; and the ambitious man hath the contentment he takes in his honours and advancements to anſwer for the loſs of the peace of his mind and a good conſcience; the drunkard pleads the goodneſs of his wine and company, the unclean perſon talks of the reſiſtleſs charms of beauty; but the ſwearer ſelleth his ſoul for nothing; ſo that of all wicked men he is the moſt ſilly and unreaſonable,

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and makes the worſt and maddeſt bargain for himſelf. Nay, other ways of ſinning may be almoſt called wiſedom, if compared to this; For other ſinners either project ſomething future, and are delighted with the hopes and expectations of it, or enjoy ſomething preſent that pleaſes them and ſatisfies ſome craving inordinate deſire: but this is pure ſinning for ſinnings ſake, onely in compliance with an ugly imperious cuſtome too much in vogue and faſhion.

7. There is no kind of ſin whatever that doth ſo highly provoke God Almighty to inflict ſome remarkable exemplary judgment on a Perſon or Nation, even in this life, as this practice of vain ſwearing by his Name. This almoſt neceſſitates him to thunder from Heaven after ſome extraordinary manner, to vindicate his power and juſtice and authority, all which are ſo notoriouſly abuſed, blaſphemed and challenged by ſuch hideous oaths and dire imprecations. He is e'en forced by ſuch horrid defiances and outrageous darings of him to ſhew his ſtrength and might to the children of men, by ſending ſome grievous plagues and

and ſore calamities amongſt them, by which they may perceive he will not always bear ſuch bold prophanations of his truth and honour and majeſty; but will at length return thoſe curſes upon men which they have ſo often wiſhed to themſelves: that he will at laſt puniſh and avenge himſelf of thoſe who have ſo openly and frequently provoked him to it by their dreadfull appeals to him.

The whole Nation of the *Jews*, that forlorn and forſaken people, the ſcorn of all the earth, are to this day a ſtanding monument of God's implacable anger and wrath upon a like occaſion, when they ſo ſolemnly curſed themſelves, and prayed that the bloud of the holy *Jeſus* might be upon their heads, and the heads of their children. God is jealous and tender of his name, and will not always ſuffer it to be ſcorn'd and reproached. *Becauſe of ſwearing*, ſaith the Prophet, *the land mourneth.* God is engaged in honour to right himſelf, and maintain his name from ſuch foul contempt, leſt men ſhould begin to think either that he is not at all, or that he is deaf to all their loud calls and impudent invocations.

8. Laſtly,

8. Laſtly, I onely add this one peculiar conſideration to you who now hear me, aſſembled in this place for the worſhip of that great God, for the honour of whoſe name I am pleading: that this cuſtome of vain ſwearing is the great ſcandal to our Church of *England*, and thoſe that adhere to it in its preſent eſtabliſhment. This was of old, and is ſtill the great objection againſt thoſe of the Church-way, as they ordinarily call us, that ſo many amongſt us allow themſelves in this ſinfull practice; nay not onely uſe it, but look on it as their credit ſo to doe. You ſee the fruit, ſay they, of your Common-prayers, of your read devotions, of your decent and orderly worſhip which you ſo much plead for. You may judge of the goodneſs and efficacy of that way, by thoſe oaths and curſes that abound ſo much in thoſe of your profeſſion. And really, what can we anſwer to this charge? can we abſolutely deny it? Muſt we not rather confeſs, amongſt friends at leaſt, that it is in ſome meaſure true, that the Separatiſts and Diſſenters do more generally reſtrain themſelves from this lewd practice, and do not ſo ordi-

ordinarily allow themſelves in this vice, as too many amongſt us doe? Now it is not a ſufficient anſwer to this to recriminate and tell them of as great ſins that they are guilty of; that they can lye, cheat and diſſemble, are factious and ungovernable, though they will not ſwear, which is ſometimes replied in this caſe: for this, though never ſo true, is not ſufficient to wipe off this diſgrace and reflexion from our Church: but the true anſwer to this is, that thus it always was in the world, and ever will be, that where there are different opinions and parties in Religion, and one is favoured by the publick Laws, and countenanced by the Government, all thoſe who are of no Religion will be ſure to be of that ſide which is uppermoſt, which the King and Court is of, which is freeſt from danger. So that all the prophane, wicked, diſſolute livers will be of our Church, as long as the doctrine of it is the eſtabliſhed owned Religion of the Nation; but if ever the tide ſhould turn, and another Party get the upper hand, they ſhould have the company of thoſe men alſo, unleſs ſome worldly intereſt did interfere and hinder them. Such men of ſuch

looſe

looſe principles and ſeared conſciences matter not what Religion they profeſs, or whether any at all. But do theſe receive any encouragement or countenance amongſt us? do we boaſt of their godlineſs? do we account theſe to live anſwerably to their profeſſion? do not we complain of them as well as our Adverſaries? and would to God all ſuch as hate to be reformed, would even leave our Church. 'Twould be an happy day if all ſuch ungodly wicked wretches, who will not be won over by the excellent means and arguments of our Religion, would alſo forſake that profeſſion which in practice they diſown, nay, blemiſh and diſcredit; that they would be of any Party, run over to our enemies, rather than continue to diſhonour the beſt ſettled and pureſt Church in the world. Ye now who, by your preſence at theſe her ſolemn devotions, ſeem concerned for the glory, preſervation and ſecurity of our Church, it is much in your power to wipe off ſuch blots and aſperſions, to anſwer ſuch reflexions, and to ſtop the mouths of all oppoſers, by a due care and government of all your words and actions: and by the innocency and unblame-

blameableneſs of your lives, your unfeigned piety and reverence towards God, your invincible truth and faithfulneſs, and other remarkable vertues to recommend our Church even to thoſe who are without: eſpecially be perſuaded to join all your endeavours againſt this vice by keeping a ſtrict guard againſt it, in your ſelves by keeping from all appearance of it; by not ſuffering it in your inferiours, or thoſe that have any dependance upon you; by mildly and ſeaſonably warning and reproving thoſe of your neighbours and acquaintance that are guilty of this folly. In a word, let us all obſerve ſuch exact truth in all our chat and diſcourſe, be ſo conſtant to our promiſes, that at any time our word may paſs without any farther engagement, that we may never think it neceſſary to aſſure our credit or faith by an oath.

Amongſt the *Romans* the Prieſt of *Jupiter* was in no caſe permitted to ſwear, becauſe it was not handſome that he who was ſo nearly related to their great God, and charged with ſuch divine matters as the care of Religion, ſhould be diſtruſted about ſmall things. And we know amongſt

mongſt our ſelves ſolemn formal oaths are not in many caſes required from perſons of honour; their word upon their honour hath equal credit with the expreſs oath of inferiour perſons. Now ſuch would our bleſſed Saviour have all his diſciples to be, ſo true and faithfull, that there ſhould be no need of oaths to confirm their ſpeeches, but that the holineſs and ſtrictneſs of their lives ſhould give ſuch undoubted teſtimony to, and command ſo firm a belief of all they ſay, as that no farther aſſeveration ſhould be able to vouch it more. I conclude all with thoſe ſayings of the wiſe Son of *Sirach*, *Ecclus.* 23. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

*Accuſtome not thy mouth to ſwearing, neither uſe thy ſelf to the naming of the Holy one.*

*For as a ſervant that is continually beaten ſhall not be without a blue mark, ſo he that ſweareth and nameth God continually ſhall not be faultleſs.*

*A man that uſeth much ſwearing ſhall be filled with iniquity, and the plague ſhall never depart from his houſe. If he ſhall offend,*

*fend, his ſin ſhall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his ſin, he maketh a double offence. And if he ſwear in vain, he ſhall not be innocent, but his houſe ſhall be full of calamities.*

*There is a word that is clothed about with death, God grant that it be not found in the heritage of Jacob: for all ſuch things ſhall be far from the godly, and they ſhall not wallow in their ſins.*

*Uſe not thy mouth to intemperate ſwearing, for therein is the word of ſin.*

*But I ſay unto you, ſwear not at all.*

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A SER-

# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

### The Ninth Sermon.

*St.* MATTH. I. 21.

*—And thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus; for he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.*

THAT the appearance of the ever bleſſed Son of God in our mortal nature was upon ſome very great and moſt important deſign, not otherwiſe at all, or at leaſt, not ſo happily

by any other means to be accompliſhed, every one muſt needs grant at firſt hearing. It could not be any indifferent trivial errand or buſineſs that a perſon of ſuch infinite honour and dignity was employed about, which brought down God himſelf from the regions of glory and light inacceſſible to dwell in an earthly tabernacle, and to veil the ſplendour of his Majeſty with a body of fleſh. This was ſuch a ſurprizing condeſcenſion of him that had lived from all eternity in the boſome of his Almighty Father, this ſignified ſuch wonderfull love and regard to that humane nature he aſſumed, that all men cannot but reaſonably promiſe themſelves the greateſt advantages imaginable from ſuch a gratious undertaking. That our forlorn nature ſhould be thus highly honoured and exalted, as to be after ſuch an unſpeakable manner united to the divine, doth evidently aſſure us of God's good-will towards ſinfull men, that he yet entertained thoughts of mercy towards us, and was loth that the folly of his creatures ſhould prove their irrecoverable ruine.

Had

Had God ſent a meſſage to us by the meaneſt ſervant in his heavenly Court, it had been a favour too great for us to have expected, and for which we could never have been enough thankfull. Had he commanded an hoſt of illuſtrious Angels to have flown all over the earth, and loudly to have proclaim'd God's willingneſs to have been reconciled to men, ſhould we not all with mighty joy and wonder have regarded and adored ſuch ſtupendous grace and goodneſs, crying out, *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindfull of him? or the ſon of man, that thou thus viſiteſt him?*

But that God himſelf ſhould deſcend from his heavenly habitation to be clothed with our rags; that he *who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, ſhould *take on him the form of a ſervant, and be found in the faſhion and likeneſs of ſinfull fleſh*, this aſtoniſhes not onely men, but Angels themſelves: for *he took not on himſelf the nature of Angels*, nor appeared for their reſcue and deliverance, who had left their firſt manſions of glory; but was pleaſed ſo far to humble himſelf, as to

undertake the cauſe and patronage of us vile worms, ſinfull duſt and aſhes, even whilſt we were enemies, traytours and rebels to his divine Majeſty, and utterly unworthy of the leaſt gratious look from him, though we had never ſo earneſtly beſought it: in our behalf it was that he did mediate and intercede, he ſtepp'd in between guilty wretched us and God's juſtice; perfected our redemption, procured our liberty, and purchaſed eternal life and happineſs for all men on the eaſie and pleaſant conditions of the Goſpel. *And thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus; for he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.*

In my diſcourſe on theſe words I ſhall onely

I. Shew you how, or by what means the Son of God became our *Jeſus*, or did ſave men from their ſins.

II. Draw ſome plain inferences from it.

I. How, or by what means the Son of God became our *Jeſus*, or did ſave men from their ſins.

Now

Now in order to the ſalvation of ſinners, the great end of our Saviour's Incarnation, theſe two things were neceſſary to be done; one of which principally reſpects God, the other ſinners themſelves.

1. In order to the ſalvation of ſinners it was neceſſary to obtain and purchaſe the pardon of their ſins, and reconciliation with God.

2. It was farther neceſſary that ſinners themſelves ſhould be reform'd, and turned from their ſins to the love and practice of true righteouſneſs and goodneſs; that ſo they might be in ſome meaſure qualified and diſpoſed for God's grace and mercy.

1. In order to the ſalvation of ſinners it was neceſſary to obtain and purchaſe the pardon of their ſins, and reconciliation with God. It is true indeed, that God Almighty by the unlimited goodneſs and compaſſionateneſs of his own nature is infinitely inclin'd to all acts of favour and pity; and he might without

wrong to any one (if he had ſeen it fit) abſolutely have pardoned the ſins of mankind, without any other conſideration than their repentance: but out of his infinite wiſedom he rather choſe to diſpenſe his pardoning grace after ſuch a manner as ſhould not at all ſeem to reflect upon his exact juſtice, immaculate holineſs, and unchangeable truth, and might not give the leaſt encouragement to ſinners to preſume farther upon his mercy and goodneſs; as it would have done for God lightly and eaſily to have paſſed by ſuch notorious offences, and without any ſatisfaction to have receded from all his threatnings. He would not therefore propound terms of reconciliation with mankind without ſome publick reparation of the divine Honour and Authority, and open manifeſtation of his juſt diſpleaſure againſt ſin and diſobedience.

(1.) In order to our reconciliation with God, it was neceſſary that ſome publick reparation ſhould be made of the divine Honour and Authority. The ſins of the world were an unſpeakable affront to the divine Majeſty, and an open ſcorn put upon his moſt excellent Laws and Govern-

Government. Now our mercifull Creatour inclined to forgive the ſons of men that great debt which they were never able themſelves to diſcharge, yet would ſo contrive it, that his clemency ſhould no ways obſcure or impair the glory of his Sovereign dignity, juſtice and holineſs. It was moſt highly congruous, that whilſt he pardoned the offenders, yet his Government ſhould be acknowledged, the righteouſneſs of his Laws vindicated, his Honour and Authority ſecured.

All which was moſt effectually done by our bleſſed Saviour, the Son of God's negotiating our peace in our nature, putting himſelf into the place of ſinners, and anſwering all demands for us. By this the infinite holineſs of God's pure nature was declared to all the world, in that he would have no entercourſe with, nor ever receive into his favour ſuch vile unworthy wretches as we were, but onely in and through ſo holy, ſo perfect a Mediatour. By this it appear'd that God at firſt upon good reaſons eſtabliſhed his laws, and pronounced his threatnings, ſince he would not without ſuch a glorious compenſation go back from them.

We

We have now the greateſt cauſe given us to tremble at his ſevere juſtice, to adore his ſovereign power and dominion, even whilſt we admire and feel his love and kindneſs to us; ſince no other conſideration could prevail with God to remit our offences, but the powerfull interpoſition of his onely begotten Son, and his ſuffering in our nature thoſe pains and torments which were due to our ſins.

(2.) By this appearance of the Son of God was God's hatred and grievous diſpleaſure againſt ſin moſt abundantly manifeſted, in that he would not hear of, nor offer any pardon or mercy without ſuch a valuable ſatisfaction. Here God poured forth his utmoſt vengeance againſt ſin, when he delivered up to ſuch a cruel and curſed death that Perſon that was moſt dear to him, and leaſt deſerved any ſuch treatment from him, before he would forgive it. Can we now poſſibly think that there is but little evil in, or that God is not much offended with that which could no other ways be expiated but by ſuch pretious bloud? Can any man imagine that it is a cheap thing to ſin, when God himſelf in our fleſh was bruiſed

bruiſed and buffeted, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the croſs for it? That ſurely was no trifle or indifferent matter that cauſed the Son of God to bleed and die. That ſore was deadly that could be cured by no other balſame but his bloud. If any thing could ſhew the fierceneſs of God's wrath againſt ſin, ſurely it muſt be the gaping wounds and bleeding ſide of our Savour. Look on this his wonderfull humiliation; ſee the pits that were digged in his hands and feet, and the furrows that were made on his back, and then tell me what an accurſed thing muſt that be that made God ſo diſpleaſed, and faſtned our bleſſed Lord to the Gibbet. So that by our Saviour's incarnation, obedient life and patient death, the divine honour was more illuſtriouſly repaired, his authority more clearly vindicated, his juſtice and ſeverity againſt ſin more openly declared, diſobedience more highly diſgraced and condemned, than if all the Sons of *Adam* had periſhed eternally in their rebellion. But this being once done by the Son of God's appearing in our behalf, this great propitiatory Sacrifice being offer'd for the ſins of the world, God now thought it fit and con-

conſiſtent with the glory of all his Attributes, and the ends of government, to tender life and peace to ſinners upon the moſt equal and reaſonable conditions of the Covenant of Grace.

This is the admirable temperament and expedient found out by the wiſedom of God, by which God glorifies his mercy in the pardon of ſin without any violation of his juſtice or truth, though he had denounced death againſt it. Thus this bleſſed *Jeſus* opened to us the gates of Paradiſe, removed the flaming Cherubims, took away the partition-wall between God and men, and put us all into a fair capacity of being for ever happy. To him alone do we and all men owe, that God will now deal with mankind upon ſuch favourable conditions, by a new law ſuited and accommodated to our circumſtances and infirmities in this lapſed ſtate; that God upon the account of *Chriſt*'s gratious undertaking for us is ready and forward to be reconciled with us, to forgive all that is paſt, and to make us as bleſſed as our natures are capable of: and of this benefit all that hear of the Goſpel do equally partake. For we are

not

not to imagine that our Saviour came into the world upon ſo little and narrow a deſign, as onely to reſcue and redeem peremptorily and abſolutely a few particular favourites without any conditions, but he hath put all men, thoſe eſpecially to whom his Goſpel is preached, in a ready and eaſie way of obtaining pardon and ſalvation. And thus our redemption, juſtification and ſalvation, as to the valuable meritorious cauſes, depend onely on our Saviour. In all this work we have not the leaſt hand, we have no place nor part. It was not any thing in us, or that can be done by us, that moved God to contrive, or our Saviour to accompliſh our redemption, but onely the pity he had of us in our forlorn miſerable condition.

Here alſo is the onely comfort and ſecurity of guilty minds depreſſed with ſhame and fear for their ſins: that *We have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins.* That we are not to ſtand the brunt of God's anger or diſpleaſure our ſelves, ſince his own Son hath voluntarily offered himſelf to ſcreen mankind

kind from the divine wrath and vengeance. And if we do but thoroughly consider how great and ſublime a perſon he was, we cannot in the leaſt doubt the prevalency and ſucceſs of his appearing for us. We ought not to deſpair of obtaining any thing from God, fit for him to grant, when we preſent our ſelves before him with ſuch a Mediatour and Interceſſour, in whom he is infinitely well-pleaſed, and *who is able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come unto God by him.* Thus this *Jeſus* hath ſaved us from our ſins in the firſt ſenſe; that is, obtained and purchaſed the pardon of them, and made God placable to us.

But this is not all.

2. In order to the ſalvation of ſinners, it is farther neceſſary that men ſhould be freed from the power of ſin, and from their evil natures, and become really good and holy. It is not enough that God ſhould be made willing to forgive our ſins, unleſs we alſo are made willing to forſake them. Chriſt came not to ſave us from the evil conſequences of our ſins whilſt we loved them, and delighted our ſelves

ſelves in them. He did not purchaſe for us an indulgence or licence to ſin without puniſhment. That indeed had been an employment unworthy of the Son of God, nay an impoſſible task to have reconciled God to unhallow'd and impure minds. The reformation of the world, the reparation of our natures, the purifying our minds, the implanting the divine nature in men, were as much the deſign of his incarnation, as the vindication of the divine juſtice, to which all the world was obnoxious; and (pardon me if I ſay it) he is more our Saviour by freeing us from the dominion of ſin, than from the penalty. Our bleſſed Lord had not been ſo kind and gratious to us, had he obtained Heaven for us (could ſuch a thing poſſibly have been) whilſt we continued impenitent, and utterly unlike to God.

Now there are theſe two things abſolutely neceſſary for the recovery of mankind, and making us really happy, repentance for ſins paſt, and ſincere obedience for the future; and to effect both theſe, no means ſo likely as this appearance of the Son of God in our nature.

(1.) As

(1.) As for repentance for ſins paſt, what in the world can be imagined more effectual for the working in men an ingenuous ſhame and ſorrow for what they have done amiſs, than theſe tender offers of God's pardon and acceptance upon our ſubmiſſion and returning to a better mind? We have now all poſſible aſſurance given us that mercy is to be had for the moſt grievous offenders. Nothing can exclude or exempt us from this act of grace, but onely our own wilfull and obſtinate refuſal of life and happineſs.

All men are in the condition of the prodigal Son in the Parable of our Saviour, *Luke* 15. They have gone aſtray from their Father's houſe after their own inventions; promiſing themſelves indeed great pleaſures and full ſatisfactions in a licentious riotous courſe of life; but ſoon wearied with ſuch painfull drudgeries, and many woefull diſappointments, at laſt they begin to recollect themſelves, to remember that plenty they had enjoy'd of all good things in their Father's houſe, how eaſily and happily they lived whilſt they

they continued under his mild and gracious government, and to think of returning thither again; but the ſenſe of their horrid guilt and unworthineſs flying in their faces, fills them with diſmal fears and anxious deſpair, ſo that they cannot hope for any kind reception or entertainment after ſuch an ungratefull rebellion.

Now let us ſuppoſe this Parable thus continued; that the Father, who was ſo highly provoked, had nevertheleſs ſent his other Son, who had never offended him, into a far Countrey, expoſed to many difficulties and hazards, to ſeek and find out his loſt Brother, to beſeech him to be reconciled, to promiſe him that he ſhould be dealt with as if he had never diſpleaſed him. Would not ſuch condeſcenſion and unparallel'd goodneſs have melted and diſſolved the poor Prodigal's heart? what joy would ſoon have o'erſpread his face? with what gladneſs would he have hearken'd to ſuch an overture? what haſte would he have made home? Could he after this have doubted of his Father's love and kindneſs to him?

This therefore is the greateſt encouragement that can be given to our repentance, that God hath now by his Son declared himſelf exorable and placable, more willing to forgive, than we can be to ask it of him; and can we deſire pardon and peace upon more equal and eaſie terms? Can any thing be conceived more reaſonable, than that before our ſins be forgiven, we ſhould humbly acknowledge our faults, and with full purpoſe of heart reſolve to doe ſo no more? and if ſuch love and kindneſs of Heaven towards us will not beget ſome relenting and remorſe in us, if ſuch powerfull arguments will not prevail with us to grow wiſe and conſiderate, it is impoſſible that any ſhould.

(2.) As for ſincere obedience for the future, without which we can never be accepted by God, nor be made happy; this alſo our Saviour hath moſt ſufficiently engaged us to; by his doctrine clearly revealing God's mind and will to us, ſetting before us his own moſt excellent example, promiſing us all needfull help and aſſiſtence, and propounding eternal rewards

wards and puniſhments as the motives of our obedience.

1. He hath clearly revealed to us God's nature, and his whole mind and will concerning our ſalvation. He came into the world a Preacher of righteouſneſs, plainly to inſtruct mankind in all their duty towards God, themſelves, and one another. He freed men from the intolerable yoke of many burthenſome and coſtly ceremonies, and brought in a rational ſervice, an everlaſting righteouſneſs, conſiſting in purity, humility and charity; all his commands being ſuch as are moſt becoming God to require, and moſt reaſonable for us to perform. They are moſt agreeable to our beſt underſtandings, perfective of our natures, fitted to our neceſſities and capacities, the beſt proviſion that can be made for the peace of our minds, quiet of our lives, and mutual happineſs even in this world: they are eaſie and benign, humane and merciſull inſtitutions, and all his laws ſuch as we, ſhould chuſe to govern our ſelves by, were we but true to our ſelves, and faithfull to our own intereſt. He hath not denied us the uſe or enjoyment of any

thing but what is really evil and hurtfull to us; he hath conſidered our infirmities and manifold temptations, maketh allowances for our wandrings and daily failings, and accepteth of ſincerity inſtead of abſolute perfection; ſo that the advantages and excellency of his laws are as great an argument to oblige us to the obſervance of them, as the divine authority by which they were enacted.

2. Our Saviour propounded himſelf an example of all that he required of us, the better to direct us in our duty, and to encourage us to the performance of it; ſince nothing is expected from us, but what the Son of God himſelf was pleaſed to ſubmit unto. He converſed therefore publickly in the world, in moſt inſtances that occur in humane life; giving us a pattern of an innocent and uſefull converſation, thereby to recommend his Religion to us, and to oblige us to tread in his ſteps, and to follow him as the leader and great Captain of our ſalvation.

3. He hath promiſed, and doth continually afford the mighty aſſiſtences of his holy Spirit to all thoſe who humbly beg

beg it of him, to ſtrengthen them in every good work, and to join with, and ſecond their faithfull endeavours. He will never fail an honeſt mind, nay he doth firſt ſtrive with men, prevent and ſurprize them by his good motions and ſuggeſtions. He doth not ſlight any weak attempts, but cheriſheth the very firſt beginnings of vertue and goodneſs. He doth not forſake us at our firſt refuſal, but ſtill ſtands at the door knocking, waiting our amendment. He is always ready at hand to help and ſuccour us under all temptations or diſcouragements that we may meet with in our Chriſtian courſe. He hath appointed many excellent means of grace, and even to this day hath continued his Miniſters and *Ambaſſadors* in the world to *beſeech men in his name to be reconciled to God.*

4. He hath engaged us to the doing of God's will by moſt glorious rewards, even everlaſting pleaſures and immortal happineſs, *ſuch as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor could it ever enter into the heart of man to conceive*; and ſtill farther, that no means might be omitted likely to work upon reaſonable creatures,

he hath denounced moſt ſevere threatnings againſt all thoſe who refuſe to comply with his gratious offers, even eternal flames, remedileſs torments and miſeries, and that they ſhall be doomed for ever to the company, and partake of the fate of Devils and infernal Fiends. Thus our bleſſed Lord hath propounded the moſt proper object of fear to keep men from ſin, and alſo preſented the moſt deſireable object of hope to encourage men to be good.

And to give us the greateſt aſſurance of all this that we can poſſibly deſire, he hath confirmed and eſtabliſhed his doctrine, not onely by thoſe undoubted miracles which he wrought, and ſufferings he underwent in atteſtation to its truth and divinity, but alſo by his own reſurrection from the dead, and viſible aſcenſion into Heaven; where in our nature he hath taken poſſeſſion of that eternal joy which he purchaſed for us, and liveth for ever at God's right hand to intercede for us, to protect and rule his Church, to diſtribute his gifts and graces, to ſubdue all our enemies, and at laſt to inſtate all his true diſciples in the ſame glory and eternal life he is now poſſeſſed of;

of; and ſo to become their complete Saviour.

All this is a very imperfect deſcription of but a little part of what our Saviour hath really done towards the reformation and amendment of ſinners: for indeed there is nothing that could have been done towards the ſalvation of men which this *Jeſus* hath not done for us: And I believe all the world may be challenged to name any one help, motive or encouragement to the love and ſervice of God, that is ſuited to the nature of God, of Man, and of Religion, which is not afforded to us by this appearance of the Son of God in our nature to mediate for us. By the Goſpel it is therefore that *Chriſt* ſaves ſinners, which is therefore called, *Rom.* 1. 16. *the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew firſt, and then to the Greek*; it being moſt admirably contrived to the end it was deſigned for, the *opening of* mens *eyes, and turning them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God.*

And this the holy Scriptures often declare to us, that *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil; might redeem us from our vain converſation*, renew our minds, and form them over again, and *purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* And all that our Saviour did and ſuffered for us towards the procuring of our pardon and peace will ſignify nothing to us, will not be in the leaſt available for our benefit, unleſs he firſt ſave us from our ſins, by waſhing and cleanſing our natures, and ſubduing all our luſts and inordinate paſſions, and making us conformable to his own image in true holineſs and righteouſneſs. 'Twill be no advantage to us that he was born into this world, unleſs he be formed in our minds, and we become new creatures, ſuch as he requires us to be. Now in all this our Saviour deals with men according to their natures, as rational governable creatures, moves them by hopes and fears, draws them with the cords of a man, and will have heaven and happineſs be the reward of their own vertuous choice and free obedience.

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The ſhort of all is this. In the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt* (which as at this time he came down from Heaven to reveal to men) God Almighty, out of his infinite compaſſion to his degenerate creatures, hath preſcribed ſuch methods, appointed ſuch means, given ſuch examples, encouragements, aſſiſtences, that nothing can be thought fit and likely to promote the ſalvation of all men, but what his goodneſs and wiſedom have therein moſt abundantly ſupply'd us with, unleſs we would have him offer violence to the liberty of our will, and force us to be vertuous and happy whether we will or no, which would be to alter our natures, and make us another ſort of creatures; but ſuch care is taken, ſuch proviſion is made for our happineſs, that we have nothing left us but onely the power of being miſerable, if it be our reſolved mind (notwithſtanding all poſſible obligations to the contrary) to be ſo.

If men will ſtop their ears againſt the voice of the Charmer, though he charm never ſo wiſely, if they will chuſe, court and embrace ſin and ruine; if the ſtrongeſt

geſt arguments will not prevail, if the moſt forcible engagements will not perſuade; if neither the moſt glorious promiſes, nor the ſevereſt threatnings, nor intereſt, nor ſelf-love, nor any of thoſe conſiderations by which men are ſwayed in other affairs, will at all move them in matters of greateſt moment, they muſt periſh, and that moſt deſervedly and irrecoverably. If after all this ſinners will die, and be damned even as it were in ſpite of Heaven, maugre all that God or Chriſt hath done for them, they muſt e'en thank themſelves for it, and are onely to charge it upon their own wilfull and incurable folly and baſe contempt of ſuch infinite love and kindneſs. Thus I have briefly ſhewn you how, or by what means, the Son of God truly became our *Jeſus* or Saviour by *ſaving his people from their ſins.*

II. It onely remaineth that in a few words I draw ſome concluſions from what I have ſaid.

1. Hence we may learn, that the honour of the Son of God, as Saviour of the world, is beſt ſecured and exalted by an actual

actual obedience to his laws; that we ought not to ſhift off all duty and work from our ſelves upon him alone, leaving it wholly to him to ſave us if he pleaſeth, without any care or trouble of ours, nor truſt to, and relie altogether upon his righteouſneſs and obedience, without any of our own; ſince, as I have ſhewn you, he muſt ſave us from the power of our ſins, before ever he will ſave us from the penal conſequences of them. So that the efficacy of *Chriſt*'s undertaking for us, and the neceſſity of our own perſonal righteouſneſs do very well conſiſt together, and each hath its proper work in obtaining the pardon of our ſins, and the favour of God. Our Saviour's incarnation and perfect obedience even unto death, is the ſole meritorious cauſe of our acceptance with God, and of our ſalvation. He alone purchaſed thoſe great benefits for us, made atonement, paid our ranſome, and procured this covenant of grace from God, wherein eternal life is promiſed to penitent ſinners. But then theſe great advantages are not immediately and abſolutely conferr'd upon us, but under certain qualifications and conditions of repentance, faith, and ſincere obedi-

obedience; for the performance of which the holy Spirit is never wanting to ſincere endeavours. We do therefore vilely affront and diſgrace our bleſſed Lord, when we boldly expect to be ſaved by him whilſt we continue in our ſins. Nay we ought to think our ſelves as much beholden to him for his doctrine, and the aſſiſtences of his grace, and the glorious promiſes of the Goſpel, by which we are made truly holy and righteous, as for his ſufferings and death, by which he ſatiſfied God's juſtice, and purchaſed the pardon of our ſins.

2. I ſhall hence make that inference of the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 2. 3. *How then ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* Hath God ſo abundantly provided for our happineſs, hath his onely begotten Son done and ſuffer'd ſo much for it, and ſhall we be ſo ſottiſh and ſtupid as fooliſhly to deſpiſe it, when it hath been ſo ſignally the unwearied care of Heaven to procure it for us? It is onely our own advantage that is deſign'd, God projects no private profit, nor doth any accrue to him from the ſalvation of all mankind. Shall we our ſelves therefore madly de-

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feat all theſe deſigns of grace and goodneſs towards us by our invincible reſolution to ruine and undoe our ſelves? Did the onely begotten Son of God as at this time deſcend from the regions of bliſs and happineſs, was he born into this miſerable world, and did he humble himſelf to take our fleſh, that by that means he might exalt mankind, and make us capable of dwelling in the higheſt Heavens, and all this out of mere pity and compaſſion of our deſperate condition; and ſhall we think the denying our ſelves a luſt, or the ſatisfaction of a forbidden appetite, or a ſhort-liv'd pleaſure too much for the obtaining the ſame glory? Did he live here a poor, mean and contemptible life, and at laſt die a ſhamefull death to merit eternal life for us; and for the obtaining the ſame, ſhall we grudge to live a ſober, temperate and honeſt life?

Oh how will this conſideration one day aggravate our torment! What vexation and anxiety will it one day create in our minds, with what horrour and deſpair will it fill our guilty ſouls? Had God predeſtinated us from all eternity to everlaſting miſery, ſo that it had been impoſ-

impoſſible for us to have avoided our ſad fate; had he never provided a Mediatour and Redeemer for us, it would have been a great eaſe in another world to conſider that we could no ways have eſcaped this doom. But when we ſhall reflect upon the infinite love and kindneſs of God, and how deſirous he was that all men ſhould be ſaved; when we ſhall conſider the wonderfull pity and compaſſion of our Saviour in being born and dying for us, and procuring for us ſuch eaſie terms of ſalvation, and ſo often by his Spirit moving and exciting us to our duty, and the care of our ſouls; when we ſhall think of thoſe many obligations he hath laid upon us, and the wiſe methods he hath uſed for our recovery and amendment; and how that nothing was wanting on God's part, but that we might now have been praiſing, bleſſing and adoring his goodneſs and wiſedom amongſt the glorified Spirits in the happy regions of undiſturbed peace and joy; and yet that we through our own moſt ſhamefull neglect (though often warned to the contrary) are now forced in vain to ſeek but for a drop of water to cool the tip of our tongues. How will this heighten

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our future pains, and prove the very eſſence of Hell?

Better ſhall it be in the laſt day for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, places overrun with luſt and barbarity; for the Nations that ſit in darkneſs, and never heard of theſe glad tidings of a Saviour, than for you to whom this ſalvation is come; but you caſt it behind your backs. The fierceſt vengeance, the ſevereſt puniſhments are reſerved for wicked Chriſtians, and what can we imagine ſhall be the juſt portion of thoſe whom neither the condeſcenſion and kindneſs, nor wounds and ſufferings of the Son of God could perſuade; nor yet the excellency, eaſineſs and profitableneſs of his commands invite, nor the promiſes of unexpreſſible rewards allure, nor the threatnings of eternal puniſhment engage to live and be happy?

In vain therefore do ſuch come hither to celebrate the memory of *Chriſt*'s birth. They of all men who deſpiſe this great ſalvation, purchaſed by the Son of God, have no great cauſe to rejoyce this day; nay, happy had it been for them (who

ſtill

ſtill perſiſt in their ſins, notwithſtanding all that *Chriſt* hath done to ſave them from them) if this holy *Jeſus* had never been born.

3. Laſtly, Let us all improve this preſent opportunity to return our moſt humble praiſes and thankſgivings for ſo great and unvaluable a bleſſing, and to join our voices, as well as we are able, with thoſe bright *Seraphims* and that *heavenly Hoſt* that attended and celebrated *Chriſt*'s nativity; (when the Heavens proclaimed his birth with their loud ſhouts of joy) ſaying, *Glory be to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, good-will towards men.*

Bleſſed be God, for ever bleſſed be his holy name, who hath found out a way for our deliverance, *and hath raiſed up for us a mighty ſalvation; that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our life. Praiſe therefore the Lord, O our ſouls, and all that is within us praiſe his holy name; and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diſeaſes; who hath redeemed*

*our*

*our life from deſtruction, and hath crowned us with loving-kindneſs and tender mercies.*

What ſhall we now return, what do we not owe to him who came down from his imperial Throne, and infinitely debaſing himſelf, and eclipſing the brightneſs of his glorious Majeſty, became a ſervant, nay a curſe, for our ſakes, to advance our eſtate, and to raiſe us to a participation of his divine nature, and his eternal glory and bliſs?

To him therefore let us now all offer up our ſelves, our ſouls and bodies and ſpirits, and that not onely to be ſaved by him, but to be ruled and governed by him; and this he will take as a better expreſſion of our gratitude, than if we ſpent never ſo many days in verbal praiſes and acknowledgments of his love and bounty.

Let us all open our hearts and breaſts to receive and entertain this great friend of mankind, this glorious lover of our ſouls, and ſuffer him to take full poſſeſſion of them, and there to place his throne, and to reign within us without

any rival or competitour; and let us humbly beg of him, that he would be pleaſed to finiſh that work in us which he came into the world about; that by his bloud he would cleanſe and waſh us from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit; that he would ſave us from our ſins here, and then we need not fear his ſaving us from everlaſting deſtruction hereafter.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant to us all for the alone ſake of our bleſſed Lord and Redeemer, to whom with the Father, *&c.*

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A SER-

# A SERMON

Preached on

## *ASH-WEDNESDAY.*

## The Tenth Sermon.

*St.* MARK VI. 12.

*And they went out and preached, that men ſhould repent.*

THOUGH repentance be a duty never out of ſeaſon, nay is indeed the work and buſineſs of our whole lives, all of us being obliged every day to amend, yet there are ſome particular times, wherein we are

more eſpecially called upon, to review our actions, to humble our ſouls in God's preſence, to bewail our manifold tranſgreſſions, and to devote our ſelves afreſh to his ſervice; ſuch are times of affliction, either perſonal or publick, when extraordinary judgments are abroad in the earth, or are impendent over us; or when we our ſelves are viſited with any ſickneſs or grievous calamity: ſo alſo before we receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are then more ſtrictly to examine our ſelves, and renew our vows and reſolutions of living better. And to name no more, the *Church* in all ages hath thought fit to ſet a-part ſome ſolemn times to call upon men more earneſtly to repent, and to ſeek God's face before it be too late; ſuch were the faſting-days before the feaſt of the reſurrection or *Eaſter*; and accordingly our *Church*, as you have heard in the exhortation this day read to you, doth at this time eſpecially move us to earneſt and true repentance; that we ſhould *return unto our Lord God with all contrition and meekneſs of heart, bewailing and lamenting our ſinfull lives, acknowledging and confeſſing our offences, and ſeeking to bring forth worthy*

*worthy fruits of penance.* And ſuch as now ſeriouſly ſet themſelves to repent of all the ſins they have committed, uſing ſuch abſtinence as is neceſſary for the ſubduing the fleſh to the ſpirit, do certainly keep *Lent* far better than they who for ſo long time onely ſcrupulouſly abſtain from all fleſh, and call filling themſelves with the choiceſt fiſh, ſweetmeats and wine, faſting.

I ſhall at this time ſuppoſe you ſufficiently inſtructed in the nature of repentance, (it being one of the *firſt principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*, as the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* calls it, *Heb.* 6. 1.) and alſo that you will readily acknowledge the indiſpenſible neceſſity of it, in order to the obtaining the pardon of your ſins, and eternal life: and that which I now deſign, is onely to ſet before you ſome, if not the main hindrances and impediments that keep men from repentance, and to endeavour to remove them; and I ſhall diſcourſe in order of theſe three of the many that might be mentioned.

I. Want of conſideration.

II. The unſuccesfulneſs of ſome former attempts; when men have reſolved and begun to reform, but have ſoon found all their good purpoſes and endeavours blaſted and defeated, this diſcourageth them from making any farther trials.

III. The hopes of long life, and ſome better opportunity of repenting hereafter.

One of theſe is commonly the ground and cauſe of thoſe mens remaining in an impenitent ſtate, who yet are convinced of the abſolute neceſſity of repentance in order to their peace and happineſs.

I. Want of conſideration. For could men but once be perſuaded ſeriouſly and in good earneſt, as becometh reaſonable creatures, to conſider their ways and actions, patiently to attend to the dictates of their own minds, and ſoberly to weigh the reaſons and conſequences of things, there is no doubt to be made, but Religion would every day gain more proſelytes, vertue and righteouſneſs would proſper and flouriſh more in the world, and men would ſoon become aſhamed

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and afraid of nothing ſo much as vice and wickedneſs. Of ſuch infinite moment are the matters of Religion, ſo mighty and ſtrong are the arguments which it propounds to us, ſo clear and convincing are the evidences it gives us of its truth and certainty; ſo agreeable to our minds are all its principles, ſo amiable and excellent its precepts, ſo pleaſant and advantageous is the practice of them, that there ſeemeth nothing farther required to make all men in love with it, but onely that they would open their eyes to behold its beauty, that they would not ſtop their ears againſt all its moſt alluring charms.

Let men but once throughly ponder the folly and miſchief of ſin, with the benefits and rewards of piety and an holy life; let them but compare their ſeveral intereſts together, and look ſometimes beyond things preſent unto that ſtate wherein they are to live for ever, and uſe their underſtandings about theſe matters as they do about other affairs, and it is impoſſible they ſhould enjoy any tolerable peace or eaſe without a carefull and ſtrict proviſion for another world.

Vice oweth its quiet poſſeſſion of mens minds onely to their ſtupidity and inadvertency, to their careleſneſs and inconſideration: it reigns undiſturbedly onely in ignorant, ſecure, unthinking ſpirits, but ſtreight loſeth all its force and power when once men begin to look about them, and bethink themſelves what they are doing, and whither they are going. Could we but once gain thus much of wicked men, to make a ſtand, and pauſe a little, and to ceaſe but a while from the violent purſuit of their pleaſures, and fairly reflect upon their lives, and ſee what is the fruit of all their paſt follies, and conſider the end and iſſue of theſe things; could we, I ſay, but obtain thus much, we might ſpare moſt of our pains ſpent in perſuading them to repent, their own thoughts would never ſuffer them to be in quiet till they had done it. Let us but once begin to deliberate and examine, and we are ſure on which ſide the advantage will lie: ſin and wickedneſs can never ſtand a trial, let our own reaſons be but judges; it hates nothing ſo much as to be brought to the light. A vitious man, however he may brave it in the world, yet can never juſtify or approve himſelf

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to his own free thoughts; and however he may plead for ſin before others, yet he can never anſwer the objections his own conſcience would bring againſt it, would he but once dare impartially to conſider them.

But the miſery of wicked men is, that they induſtriouſly baniſh all ſuch troubleſome gueſts out of their minds, inſtead of debating with themſelves, the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of any of their actions, they will not endure ſo much as to hold any parly or diſcourſe with themſelves; they endeavour either by a conſtant ſucceſſion of ſenſual delights to charm and lull aſleep, or elſe by a counter-noiſe of revellings and riotous exceſſes to drown the ſofter whiſpers of their conſciences; or elſe the hurry and tumult of this world, multiplicity of buſineſs and ſecular affairs, temporal projects and deſigns, and bodily concerns, do ſo wholly engroſs and prepoſſeſs their thoughts, that they are not at leiſure for any ſuch ſerious reflexions. They chuſe to divert themſelves by any folly or vanity, by which they may ſtifle and choak all ſuch good motions; they hate nothing ſo much as being

being alone, or at a diſtance from their dear companions in ſin, for fear leſt ſome affrighting apprehenſions ſhould ſteal or force their way in; till at laſt they come to inherit the portion of fools; that is, for ever lament and curſe their own incogitance and indiſcretion.

Now till wicked men enter into ſuch deep and earneſt conſideration of themſelves and their own eſtates, it is as impoſſible that the means of grace, the calls of the Goſpel, or the motions of God's Spirit, ſhould have any force or efficacy upon them, as that a man's body ſhould be nouriſhed by meat that he doth not digeſt, or that a medicine put into a man's pocket ſhould preſerve his health. The moſt invincible arguments cannot gain aſſent till they firſt obtain attention; and it is all one to be wholly ignorant of, or not to conſider the danger we are in; and therefore the ordinary way by which God brings ſuch men to repentance, is firſt by ſome ſudden affliction or affrighting providence to awaken and rouſe them up to a ſerious conſideration of their evil ways, and deſperate condition, which by degrees may improve into an hearty contrition, and thorough reformation. And

And oh that I could now prevail with any one that hath hitherto lived in eaſe, in a courſe of diſobedience to God's laws, to go home and diligently conſider with himſelf, and count up what he hath got by all his moſt beloved ſins, what a dreadfull and manifeſt danger he runs, how ſad and diſmal his reckoning one day muſt needs be; how inexcuſable he is in his folly, how ſhort the pleaſures of ſin are, and how ſore the puniſhments, and that it is yet, through God's grace, poſſible for him to eſcape them; and theſe and ſuch like thoughts for a while cheriſhed, would ſurely beget relentings, or at leaſt reſolutions of repentance and amendment: and if we would doe thus frequently, if we would daily ſet our ſelves to this work, we ſhould be more and more confirmed in ſuch good purpoſes.

It is much to be hoped, that none of us here preſent, who ſhew ſo much reſpect to Religion, as to join in the ſolemn worſhip of God, are ſo far hardned in ſin, but that we have ſome lucid intervals, ſome ſober moods, wherein we give our conſciences leave to ſpeak to, and

and admoniſh us; an uneaſie bed, a broken ſleep, will ever and anon bring theſe things to your remembrance; oh do not ſtreight fly from them, nor thruſt them out of your minds; nay be not contented onely to give them a fair hearing, but never leave thinking of them, and revolving them over in your minds, till they have transformed you into new creatures.

For if you will not conſider theſe things now, let me tell you, the time will ſurely ſhortly come, when you ſhall conſider them whether you will or no; when your ſins ſhall ſet themſelves in order before you, and it ſhall not be in your power to forget them, or to divert your thoughts from thoſe things which you are now ſo loth to think upon. Here indeed in this life the thoughts of God and a future ſtate often preſent and offer themſelves to us, they often ſpring up in our minds, and when expelled, recur again; but men find out ſeveral ways and artifices whereby to hinder their fixing or abiding upon their ſpirits, or at all influencing their lives; but the time will come, when we ſhall be forced to bring our

our evil ways to remembrance, and yet then conſideration will doe us no good, nor ſerve to any other purpoſe, but onely to aggravate our miſery, and double our torment. This is the firſt moſt general hindrance of repentance, want of conſideration.

II. Another hindrance of repentance is the unſuccesfulneſs of ſome former attempts; for when men have reſolved, and perhaps begun to reform, but have ſoon found all their good purpoſes and endeavours blaſted and defeated, they are apt to be thereby diſcouraged from making any farther trials. They have long had it in the purpoſe of their hearts to leave their ſins, nay ſometimes they have prevailed againſt them for ſome time, and withſtood ſome fair temptations, but yet at laſt nature did, they know not how, return, and they have been perſuaded to renew their old acquaintance with thoſe ſins which they had once forſaken: and in their conflicts with ſin they have been ſo often foiled, that they now deſpair of ever getting the day; ſhould they once again reſolve to enter upon a new courſe of life, they fear they

they ſhould onely add to the number of their offences, the breach of this vow, as they have already of many others which they formerly made.

This is the condition of many men in the world, and a very dangerous one it is; they have not yet ſinn'd themſelves paſt all ſenſe or feeling, but have ſome regrets and frequent remorſes, and when their ſpirits are at any time diſturbed with the ſenſe of their guilt, they then bethink themſelves ſeriouſly of returning to a better mind, reſolve upon a new life, and that preſently too, and perform ſome duties in order to it, and are for a little time more carefull and watchfull over themſelves, and their ways; but they are ſoon diſheartened, *their goodneſs is but like a morning cloud, and as the early dew it paſſeth away*, they are ſoon again eaſily frighted or tempted from their duty; upon any little diſcouragement that they meet with, they repent themſelves of their good choice, and forget their vertuous reſolutions, and, which is worſt of all, this they often doe; they often reſolve to begin, and as often neglect to perform what they promiſed; and

and thus they continue running an endleſs wearisome circle, of ſinning, and then reſolving againſt it, and then upon the next inviting opportunity ſinning again; till at laſt, when they have found ſo many trials and eſſays prove fruitleſs and unſuccesfull, and their good purpoſes ſo often overpower'd, they e'en ſit down contented ſlaves to their vices and luſts.

But notwithſtanding all this, what I have now repreſented to you, ought not in the leaſt to diſcourage your endeavours of amendment, but ſhould rather engage you to greater deliberation, circumſpection and caution in your proceeding in it. That your good purpoſes have ſo often proved ineffectual, is not a reaſon for not reſolving again, but onely for not doing it raſhly, inconſiderately, and by halves. The fault is certainly your own, that you have ſo frequently failed and come ſhort; it was not from any defect on God's part, in not affording you ſufficient grace, but you were ſome way plainly wanting and unfaithfull to your ſelves. And the miſcarriage of former trials onely admoni-

moniſheth you to begin again with greater care, courage and ſincerity.

I ſhall therefore briefly mention to you the chief conditions or qualifications of ſuch a reſolution as is like to hold out againſt all temptations and oppoſition, by which we may alſo ſee how it comes to paſs that mens good purpoſes do ſo often prove abortive.

1. If we would reſolve effectually, we muſt take care to found our good purpoſes upon ſuch reaſons and arguments as are univerſal, and oblige us to a thorough change, and hold indifferently for all places, circumſtances and conditions. Our pious reſolutions muſt not be made upon any contingent particular reaſons, which may ſoon chance to ceaſe, and when they do, we ſhall be in manifeſt danger of returning back to our old courſes. For inſtance, Suppoſe any one to be ſurpriſed in any baſe and unworthy action, and to have endured the ſhame and puniſhment of it, and upon theſe accounts to reſolve with himſelf, that he will never be guilty of the ſame again; but afterwards it happens that this man meets

meets with ſuch a temptation to that ſin, as that he may be confident of committing it with privacy and ſafety; judge you, whether, if he be not furniſhed with other arguments, he will not certainly fall into the ſnare, and break all his former vows to the contrary: and this is the caſe of all thoſe who reſolve for the practice of Religion, for ſome particular convenience, or to avoid ſome preſent evil, ſuch as loſs of credit, trade or gain, to preſerve their health, to oblige their relations, to pleaſe their ſuperiours, or the like: for theſe at the beſt are but ſlight and mean arguments for Religion, and they commonly hold againſt ſome ſins onely; and circumſtances may eaſily be ſo changed, that they may become no reaſons or arguments at all.

Thus one man reſolves to live well, becauſe he finds he ſhall not live long; but a good air, temperate diet, and wholſome phyſick alter the ſtate of his body and mind both together: and ſo the intemperate perſon, when he hath filled and ſtretch'd his veſſels with wine to their utmoſt capacity, and is grown

weary and ſick, and feels thoſe qualmes and diſturbances that uſually attend ſuch exceſſes, reſolves then, that he will hereafter contain himſelf within the bounds of ſobriety; till within a little while he recovers his former debauch, and is well again, and then his appetite returns, and his company invites, and he forgets both the trouble that his ſin created, and the promiſes that he made againſt it.

But now he that would reſolve for repentance and amendment ſucceſsfully, muſt doe it upon ſuch grounds as theſe; namely, the evil and baſeneſs of ſin it ſelf, and the excellency of vertue and goodneſs, out of the ſenſe of his ſubjection to his Maker, and the worth and value of his own immortal ſoul; out of gratitude to God and our bleſſed Saviour, who hath done and ſuffered ſo much for us, out of a full belief of God's continual preſence with us, and inſpection over us, and the ſtrict account he will one day call us to; out of fear of the vexations of a diſturbed conſcience, and thoſe eternal miſeries that await all impenitent ſinners, and out of hopes of that glory and happineſs, which ſhall be the reward of well-doing:

doing: for theſe reaſons will at all times ſerve to ſtabliſh and confirm our vertuous reſolutions, they will always hold good, as long as men are in their wits, they are ſufficient to anſwer every temptation, and oblige equally againſt all ſin, in all places, and upon all occaſions.

2. Let our reſolutions be made upon the matureſt and moſt deliberate conſideration of all things that can occur to our thoughts: An haſty ſudden vow is ſoon forgot, and this is one great reaſon why mens good purpoſes ſo often fail; namely, that when they are ſerious and devout, or ſcared, they then in the general, and in groſs reſolve for the future to live well and religiouſly, when yet, alas! they know not what is meant by it; and ſo when they come to be tried in any particular part of Religion, this they never thought of before, nor did they ever intend to oblige themſelves to it.

Before therefore thou engageſt thy ſelf, conſider well all circumſtances, and the ſeveral inſtances of Religion; what thou muſt part with, what companies

thou muſt forſake, what friendſhip and acquaintance thou muſt renounce, what pleaſures and profits thou muſt deny thy ſelf, what ſtrict duty and ſervice will be required of thee; and then moſt ſeriouſly examine thy ſelf, can I march through all theſe inconveniences, and overcome all the difficulties and temptations that may or can befall me in this new enterpriſe? conſult thy judgment, affections and inclinations, and make thy determination upon every particular, and be always as jealous and ſuſpicious of thy ſelf as poſſibly thou canſt, always remembring that vaſt difference that there is between things as they are onely repreſented to us by our fancies, and when they become actually and ſenſibly preſent to us: This I muſt doe, that I muſt avoid; I muſt never gratify this luſt, no not once more, whatever opportunity, provocation or deſire I may have to it; I muſt hold to this practice not onely this day, not onely at ſome certain times and ſeaſons, but conſtantly throughout the whole courſe of my life, ſhall I not ſoon grow weary of ſuch ſtrictneſs? All my worldly affairs, all my fleſhly pleaſures muſt give place to this reſolution; and can my

my heart fully, without any reſerve, conſent to ſuch an univerſal alteration? How many will this change offend? how many flouts and jeers muſt I expoſe my ſelf to by this repentance? how ſhall I anſwer ſuch an old acquaintance when he invites me to an intemperate cup? can I now wholly abſtain from what I have ſo long allowed my ſelf in?

Thus conſider all things well and thoroughly in thy mind before thou doſt reſolve, that it may be the deliberate act of the whole man, that thy underſtanding may perfectly approve of it, being fully convinced of its reaſonableneſs; that thy will may wholly conſent to it, that all thy affections may yield up themſelves and ſubmit to it, ſo that nothing that can befall thee afterwards may be able to ſtagger thee becauſe it was not foreſeen, or make thee doubt of the wiſedom of thy choice.

3. Renew theſe thy good purpoſes often, every day, yea many times every day, at leaſt whilſt they are freſh, and thou art juſt beginning thy repentance; frequently propound the ſame things to

thy thoughts and judgment, that thou mayſt ſee it is not any particular heat or fancy that forms thy reſolution.

For this is another ordinary cauſe why ſome mens good reſolutions do not hold out, namely, becauſe they are the accidental effect of ſome paſſionate commotion within them, of ſome fright or diſturbance, rather than their deliberate judgment; they depend upon ſome preſent heat, good mood or pang of devotion, which laſts not long upon them, and ſo conſequently their reſolutions have but little force and efficacy. There are ſome men of that facile temper, that they are wrought upon by every object they converſe with, whom any affectionate diſcourſe, or ſerious Sermon, or any notable accident, ſhall put into a fit of religion, which yet uſually laſts no longer, than till ſomewhat elſe comes in their way, and blots out thoſe impreſſions, and theſe men are good or bad as it happens; for it is not likely that men of ſuch volatile looſe tempers ſhould make any laſting reſolutions, either in matters of Religion, or even in any other inſtances whatever.

Ask

Ask your ſelf therefore the next day, whether you are ſtill of the ſame mind; after ſome intermiſſion put the cauſe again to examination, after that thy mind hath been diverted by other matters, and thy thoughts employed in other affairs, ſo that the warmth of thy firſt imagination is now over, try then whether thou approveſt of the ſame things: Doth not thy heart begin to ſtumble, and draw back, and ſhrink from the undertaking? doſt thou not begin to think of ſome inſtance of thy duty wherein thou deſireſt to be excuſed, or ſome ſin which thou wouldſt fain have excepted? doſt thou not hanker after a greater liberty in ſome things? if not, I know no better ſign in the world of a good reſolution, and ſuch as is like to hold out than this, when we keep the ſame mind in our different tempers, and ſeveral ſtates of life. And think not all this care too much, or too troubleſome, ſince it is neceſſary onely for a-while, till we are well ſetled and confirmed in this change, or new life. Try thy ſelf when thou art ſound and in health, as well as when under a fit of the ſtone or gout; when thou art merry and brisk, as well

as when thou art ſad and melancholy; and if thou ſtill find'ſt reaſon to perſiſt in the ſame reſolution, thou mayſt doe well, the more to fix thy ſelf, to back it with a ſolemn vow and proteſtation to Almighty God, that by his grace thou wilt keep firm and ſteadfaſt to it to the end of thy life. And it hath been farther adviſed, that we ſhould commit this to writing, keep it ſafe by us as our act and deed, by which we have devoted and given up our ſelves to God, and often reade it over, and examine our faithfulneſs to it, as that which ſhall one day be produced againſt us to our everlaſting confuſion, if we do not diſcharge and ſatisfy it. Let us alſo take the firſt occaſion to renew and confirm theſe vows and reſolutions at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there again bind thy ſelf to perform all that thou haſt promiſed; there by that ſacred body and bloud thou commemorateſt, oblige thy ſelf never to ſtart wilfully from God's ſervice, whatever difficulties thou mayſt encounter with, what temptations ſoever thou mayſt have to forſake it; and ſurely this, if any thing, is ſufficient to make us conſtant as long as any ſenſe of God or Chriſt remains in our minds.

4. Make

4. Make known this thy good reſolution to the world, be not aſhamed to own this change to other perſons, as fit occaſions may be offered: let them know that thy mind is now altered, that thou art not the ſame perſon thou wert before, that they are much miſtaken if they expect the ſame diſcourſe, the ſame compliances, the ſame practices from thee as before; that thou art now reſolved to ſerve thy Lord and Maſter even unto death, and never for the world to doo any thing that doth diſpleaſe him; that by the help of God, thou haſt fully determined, never to be any more falſe to thy Chriſtian Profeſſion, and that thou doſt glory in this thy unfeigned reſolution.

This will hinder others from tempting thee, and make them ſee it is in vain any more to aſſault or trouble thee; nay, and it will be a mighty confirmation and ſecurity to thee, for then thou wilt have this great argument to continue true to this promiſe and engagement, leſt by breaking it, thou ſhouldſt moſt juſtly become a ſport and mock to thoſe to whom thou haſt made it known, and they ſhould

ſhould ſay of thee, as our Saviour ſaith of the fooliſh builder, *behold this man began to build, but was not able to finiſh.*

5. Having fixed ſo good a purpoſe of mind, fail not to apply your ſelf to the diligent conſcientious uſe of all thoſe means of grace which God hath preſcribed and appointed, for the vanquiſhing of ſin, and for the obtaining vertue and goodneſs: Many men ſuppoſe they have done enough, when they have once brought their minds to a reſolution, though they then never think more of it; they think there is piety and ſecurity ſufficient in reſolving for the end, though they never conſider nor concern themſelves about the means; they look upon a good reſolution as a kind of holy charm, and if they do but intend to mend their lives, they reckon their lives will mend alone, without any farther pain or trouble.

But ſuch had beſt try firſt what money they can get by onely reſolving to be rich, without taking any pains for it; or let them ſee whether learning will come of it ſelf, without any reading or ſtudy, to a man that onely reſolves to be learned.

Nothing

Nothing hath done more miſchief in the world, hath made *Chriſtians* more lazy and ſecure, or given greater occaſion to that prevailing *Religion* without *vertue* amongſt us, than this one principle, that we are converted (as 'tis uſually called) by thoſe operations of God's Spirit, wherein we are wholly paſſive; ſo that it is in vain to ſtrive, contend and labour for the making our ſelves holy, as we muſt doe for the attaining of any other perfections and accompliſhments, ſince the habits of all goodneſs are ſupernaturally infuſed into us: But this is all but fancy and idle talk, for the Spirit of God works not now a-days, but according to the methods of reaſon and diſcourſe, aſſiſting us whilſt we ſincerely uſe ſuch moral means as Religion teaches, or reaſon preſcribes, and that with as much diligence, vigour and conſtancy, as if we had no aſſiſtence at all, but were wholly left to our ſelves; ſo that the way to recover our ſelves to a *Chriſtian* temper of mind after a vitious courſe of life, is in truth the very ſame by which a man recovers his health after a long diſeaſe, *viz.* by God's bleſſing upon the diligent uſe of fit means; and any other

other way is no more now to be expected than prophecy or miracles.

The reformation of an habitual ſinner is a work of time and patience; evil cuſtoms muſt be maſtered and ſubdued by degrees; and we muſt be forced to deſtine particular times, and to uſe particular proper means for the gaining of the ſeveral graces required in a Chriſtian: we muſt firſt encounter one vice or luſt, then another; and after we have done our beſt, yet perhaps a temptation may ſurpriſe us unawares, and we may fall again into the mire even after we have waſhed our ſelves in ſome meaſure, and ſo create our ſelves new work and greater trouble: we muſt expect ſometimes to come off by the worſt, before we obtain the final conqueſt; and our luſts, after they have been routed, may perchance rally, and make head again.

We muſt not therefore be preſently diſcouraged, or faint and grow weary in theſe our conflicts with ſin and vice; for if we can but bear undauntedly the firſt ſhock, and ſtand out the firſt aſſaults, the force of our enemies will ſenſibly decline,

cline, we ſhall every day gain ground, the work will grow much eaſier upon our hands; and the means of grace, if we are but conſtant and unwearied in the uſe of them, will never fail of ſucceſs.

6. Laſtly, Let us always ſecond our good reſolutions with devout prayers for the aids of God's holy Spirit to ſtrengthen us in this our undertaking; to animate us with patience and courage, to fight for us, and with us, againſt all the enemies of our ſouls; that he would furniſh us with an inward power in our minds, whereby our evil inclinations may be changed, and that by the ſtrength of his grace we may be freed from thoſe ill impreſſions that formerly ſubdued us.

For by this means God is not onely made an aſſiſtent, but a witneſs and a party, and our reſolutions come near to the nature of a vow; by this we daily oblige our ſelves afreſh to God, and renew our reſolutions, this adds the greateſt ſtrength and ſolemnity to them; and though they were at firſt begun upon too ſlight conſiderations, or too ſuddenly or weakly made, yet when once we ſeriouſly

ouſly make God concerned in them, they will then become firm and ſtrong: And indeed he that finds in himſelf no mind to pray to God for his aſſiſtence, his reſolutions, be they what they will, are certainly vain; his neglect to implore God's aid, is a ſure ſign that he hath no mind to keep them.

Often therefore proſtrate your ſelves at his footſtool, beſeech him not to deſpiſe the day of ſmall things, not to quench the ſmoaking flax, nor to break the bruiſed reed, that he would be pleaſed to bleſs and proſper theſe beginnings and firſt attempts towards a new life; profeſs your dependence upon his help and aſſiſtence, and beg of him moſt earneſtly never to leave you, nor forſake you.

And if thus reſolved, thus truſting upon God's grace, thus diligent in the uſe of all due means, we yet fail of overcoming our ſins and luſts; I ſhall then readily confeſs, that there is but little heed to be given to the promiſes of the Goſpel, that our miſery is unavoidable, and that God hath not provided a ſufficient remedy for ſinners: but therefore

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it is onely that we ſo often fall ſhort, and find temptations too hard for all our good purpoſes, becauſe we reſolve but by halves, and unadviſedly, we reſolve we know not what, we doe it raſhly or ſillily, or humourſomely, upon no reaſons, or none that will hold. This is the ſecond hindrance of mens repentance, the unſuccesfulneſs of former reſolutions, which ought to be laid onely at our own door, and charged upon our ſelves as our own fault.

III. Another great hindrance of mens repentance is the hope of long life, and better opportunity of repenting hereafter. And indeed of all the Devil's artifices to keep men off from amending their lives, this is that which prevails moſt, and with moſt men, they content themſelves with a repentance in reverſion, and continually poſtpone this one thing neceſſary; After this or that buſineſs is diſpatched, this or that luſt ſatisfied, this or that turn ſerved, when their bodies are as infirm as their ſouls, then they will take care of both together. If you look abroad into the world, you will find this is that by which chiefly wicked men maintain the quiet and peace of their minds; for they cannot

cannot endure to think of paſſing out of this life, and appearing before God in an impenitent ſtate; but their full purpoſe is to doe ſomething, ſome time or other, they cannot well tell what nor when, by which they hope to make ſome amends for all their former follies and miſcarriages.

This therefore is our moſt difficult task, not ſo much to perſuade men of the neceſſity of repentance, as to prevail with them unalterably to fix a time when this change ſhall begin, and the care of Religion take place: we find it moſt hard to convince them that it is neceſſary now at this very preſent to ſet about it: we are thought a little too hot and haſty, when we preſs wicked men to leave their ſins *to day; even whilſt it is called to day,* as long as they have ſo much time before them to doe it in. This is the moſt fatal cheat men put upon themſelves, ſo that I doubt not to ſay, that the infernal regions of darkneſs and deſpair are not crowded by any ſort of perſons ſo much as by thoſe who fully deſigned and intended to have repented before they died.

It were eaſie now at large to ſhew the infinite unreaſonableneſs and danger of ſuch delay; but I ſhall content my ſelf with propounding to you theſe two conſiderations.

1. That if we be unwilling to repent now, it is not likely that we ſhall be more willing at any other time.

2. That if we think our ſelves not able to doe it now, we ſhall be leſs able hereafter.

(1.) If we be unwilling to repent and amend now, it is not likely that we ſhall be more willing or inclined to it at any other time: for the ſame reaſon that makes any man defer it now, will be as forcible and prevalent at another time. Since the man hath found no great inconvenience from the ſins of the laſt week or month, he ſees not why he may not as well venture on them for another, and after that he ſays he will certainly become a new man; but when that time comes, yet ſtill God continues his patience, and is not weary of bearing with him, ſo that

he'll think he may ſtill venture to put it off once more, and then he will not fail to perform his good intentions of amending his life.

And this is moſt probably the conſequence of ſuch vain purpoſes of leaving our ſins hereafter; for the onely objection we have againſt doing it now, is becauſe this time is preſent, and we are loth as yet to put our ſelves to ſo much trouble and pain as this work doth require; and therefore when to morrow is as this day, and comes to be preſent too, we ſhall for the ſame reaſon for which we defer it till then, put it off ſtill to another day, and ſo it will be always a day or more to that day when we ſhall begin to repent.

So that this ought rather to be called a full purpoſe of committing ſin to day, than a reſolution of leaving it to morrow: he that reſolves to be vertuous, but not till ſome time hereafter, reſolves againſt being vertuous in the mean time; and as vertue at ſuch a diſtance is eaſily reſolved on, ſo it is as eaſie a matter always to keep it at that diſtance: the next week, ſays the ſinner, I will begin to be ſober

ſober and temperate, ſerious and devout; but the true ſenſe of what he ſays, is this, I am fully bent to ſpend this preſent week in riot and exceſs, in ſenſuality and prophaneneſs, or whatever vice it is that I indulge my ſelf in; and if we doe thus often, if it be our common courſe to put off our repentance thus from time to time, this is a moſt ſhrewd ſign, that indeed we never intend to repent at all: This is onely a pitifull device and excuſe to ſhift off the duty wholly; and ſo we ſhould interpret it in any man who ſhould deal with us after the ſame manner in our worldly affairs.

It is with wicked men in this caſe, as it is with a Bankrupt, when his Creditours are loud and clamorous, ſpeak big and threaten high, he giveth them many good words and fair promiſes, appoints them to come another day, entreats their patience but a little longer, and then he will ſatisfy them all; when yet the man really intends not to pay one farthing, nor ever thinks of compaſſing the money againſt the time: Thus do men endeavour to pacify and quiet their conſciences, by telling them they will hear

them another time; but this is onely to delude and cheat their conſciences with good words, and ſpecious pretences, making them believe, they will certainly doe, what yet they cannot endure to think of, and what they would fain wholly excuſe themſelves from; but yet this is not all, for

(2.) We ſhall be leſs able to repent, and more indiſpoſed for the work at another time than we are now. That which makes men ſo loth to be brought to reflect upon their lives paſt, is (as I before obſerved) the uneaſineſs and trouble they think they ſhall find in ſuch a work; ſo a great Trader, that hath good reaſon to think he is run much behind-hand in the world, of all things hates to look into his Books, cannot endure to hear of ſtating his accounts, and yet the longer he defers this, his accounts will become more intricate, he'll ſtill run more in debt, his condition will every day grow worſe and worſe, till at laſt 'tis paſt all recovery: and thus it is with wicked men, they would fain defer their repentance as long as ever they can, they would not yet be interrupted with ſuch grave and

ſerious

ſerious thoughts; but the miſchief is, the longer they defer it, the more they have ſtill to repent of; and not onely ſo, but they become more unable and unfit for ſuch a work; they are ſtill more backward and averſe, as having been longer uſed and accuſtomed to their ſins, and as having contracted greater familiarity with, and kindneſs for them; and by ſuch delay their ill habits grow more confirmed, their luſts and paſſions become ſtronger and more potent, and even their very natural powers and faculties are by degrees weakned and diſabled.

And for this reaſon, the ſooner we begin a religious courſe of life, the more eaſie it will prove to us, not onely becauſe in the time of youth we are moſt capable of any impreſſions, our natures being then moſt ſoft and tender, but alſo becauſe if we begin betimes, there is ſo much the leſs change to be made in our lives and tempers, our repentance then is like a man's returning into the right road as ſoon as ever he was out of his way, he hath but a few paces to go back.

You therefore who have not yet loſt all your natural modeſty, who yet bluſh at your vices, whoſe hearts are not yet hardned in ſin, would you but preſently without any delay, apply your ſelves to the ſervice of God, and practice of Religion, what abundance of care and trouble might you ſave your ſelves? how many ſad days and ſorrowfull nights might you prevent? it is in your power now upon eaſie terms to become good and vertuous, and the ſooner you begin, the leſs ſorrow, the leſs ſelf-denial, the leſs pains will ſuffice.

Now therefore, even this very day let us ſet about it, and he that hath done wickedly, let him not dare to doe the ſame ſo much as once more; let us reſolve never to have any parley with our luſts, but to make ſome conſiderable progreſs in our repentance, before ever we give ſleep to our eyes, or ſlumber to our eyelids; let not any worldly buſineſs, or the cares of this life, or even our neceſſary employments, much leſs ſinfull and vain pleaſures, ſtifle or choak any good thoughts or reſolutions, that, during this exerciſe,

exerciſe, may be raiſed in our minds: we have trifled too long already about a matter of ſuch infinite moment, it is perfect madneſs to dally any longer, when our ſouls, which are ten thouſand times more worth than our lives, are at ſtake: If we begin this very moment, God knows, we begin late enough, and who knows but to morrow may be too late? had we been wiſe we ſhould have begun ſooner.

A long and eternal adieu therefore (let us every one ſay) to all the unlawfull bewitching pleaſures of this world, I will no longer be fooled or impoſed upon by them, nor one day more live in ſuch a ſtate, as I ſhall be afraid to die in: from this hour I change my ſervice, I now lay my ſelf down at the feet of my bleſſed Maſter; without any farther diſputing the caſe, I will immediately begin my journey to my father's houſe; I will as ſoon defer eating, drinking or ſleeping, as delay to ſecure my everlaſting ſalvation, to become ſound and healthfull, to be at eaſe and in peace, to be ſafe and happy.

And for our encouragement to this, I ſhall onely, for the concluſion of all, add, that however great and heinous our ſins have been, yet we cannot be more ready to ask, than God is to grant us our pardon; we cannot be more forward to return, than he is to receive us into his embraces. And becauſe we know our ſelves obnoxious to his ſevere juſtice, and that he is a God of truth and faithfulneſs, as well as of mercy and compaſſion, and that he hateth ſin with a perfect hatred; therefore that we might not have the leaſt ſuſpicion remaining in us of his unwillingneſs to forgive ſuch high provocations and offences as we may have been guilty of, he hath been pleaſed to ſend his onely begotten Son into the world, to lay down his life a ranſome for us, to ſtand between us and God's juſtice, and by his diſmal ſufferings and curſed death to expiate our offences: ſo that we have not onely the infinite goodneſs of the divine nature to truſt to, but the vertue and efficacy of that ſacrifice which the Son of God made of himſelf, to plead for our forgiveneſs, upon our repentance and amendment.

Nor

Nor was our bleſſed Saviour onely our propitiation to die for us, and procure our attonement, but he is ſtill our Advocate, continually interceding with his Father, in the behalf of all true penitents, and ſuing out their pardon for them in the Court of Heaven: *If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*, who deprecates anger, mitigates wrath; and not onely barely intercedes for us, but with authority demands the releaſe of his captives, redeemed by his bloud, by virtue of God's promiſe and covenant.

And in order to the ſufficient promulgation of this his gratious willingneſs to forgive us upon our repentance, God hath provided and appointed an order of men, to laſt as long as the world doth, to propound to men this bleſſed overture, and in God's name *to beſeech men to be reconciled to him.*

Nay God condeſcends to prevent the worſt of men, by manifold bleſſings and favours daily obliging them, by his grace and ſpirit and ſeveral providences towards

wards them, moving, affecting and awakening the moſt grievous offenders to a timely conſideration of their ways. Though highly provoked, he yet begins firſt with us, ſo deſirous is he of our welfare.

He hath not onely outwardly proclaimed pardon to all that will ſubmit, and ſent his own Son on this meſſage of peace, but inwardly, by his ſpirit and grace, he ſolicites men to comply with it, even where it is reſiſted and deſpiſed; he forſaketh not men at their firſt denial, he giveth them time to bethink and recollect themſelves; he doth not lie at the catch, nor take preſent advantage againſt us, but with infinite patience waits to be gratious to us, hoping at laſt we ſhall be of a better mind: he doth not ſoon deſpair of mens converſion and reformation, he yet extends his grace towards thoſe who abuſe it, and offers his pardon to thoſe who ſlight it; nothing is more highly pleaſing and acceptable to him, than for a ſinner to return from the evil of his ways; nay, which is more yet, he is not onely, upon our repentance, ready to overlook all that is paſt, but he hath pro-

promiſed to reward our future obedience with eternal life, ſo that we ſhall not onely upon our repentance be freed from thoſe diſmal puniſhments which we had rendred our ſelves liable to, but likewiſe receive from God ſuch a glorious recompence, as is beyond all our conception or imagination. Now if ſuch love and kindneſs of Heaven towards us will not beget ſome relentings and remorſe in us, if ſuch powerfull arguments will not prevail with us to grow wiſe and conſiderate, it is impoſſible any ſhould.

Let us all therefore ſmite upon our breaſts, and ſay, O Lord, we are highly ſenſible of our folly, of our unworthineſs and foul ingratitude; for we have ſinned againſt thee, and done evil in thy ſight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children: but we have heard that the great King of the World is a moſt merciſull King, that he delights not in the death of ſinners, but had rather they ſhould repent and live: we cannot longer withſtand or oppoſe ſuch unſpeakable goodneſs, we are overcome by ſuch wonderfull kindneſs and condeſcention, we reſign up our ſelves wholly to the conduct

duct of his good ſpirit, and will never withdraw or alienate our ſelves from him any more; we will now become God's true and loyal ſubjects, and continue ſuch as long as we breathe, nor ſhall any thing in the world be able to ſhake or corrupt our faith and allegiance to him.

What puniſhment can be too ſore, what ſtate black and diſmal enough for thoſe who contemn all theſe offers and kindneſſes of Heaven? who will not by any means be won, to look after, and have mercy upon themſelves, to conſult their own intereſt and welfare? what pity can they expect, who obſtinately chuſe to be miſerable, in deſpite of all the goodneſs of God, and grace of the Goſpel?

The Lord grant, that we may all in this our day, know and mind the things that belong to our everlaſting peace, before they are hid from our eyes.

The

# The Eleventh Sermon.

## 1 COR. XV. 35.

*But ſome man will ſay, how are the dead raiſed up? And with what body do they come?*

THE Apoſtle having in the beginning of this Chapter moſt firmly eſtabliſhed the truth and reality of our Saviour's reſurrection from the dead, proceeds to infer from thence the certainty of our own reſurrection, *v.* 12, 13. *Now if Chriſt be preached that he roſe from the dead, how ſay ſome among you that there is no reſurrection of the dead? But if there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is not Chriſt riſen.* "It cannot now "any longer ſeem an impoſſible or incre- "dible thing to you that God ſhould raiſe "the dead, ſince you have ſo plain and "undoubted an example of it in the per- "ſon of our bleſſed Lord, who having "been truly dead and buried, is now "alive,

" alive, and hath appeared unto many " with the viſible marks of his crucifixion " ſtill remaining in his body. And to ſhew of what general concernment his reſurrection was, *the graves were opened*, as St. *Matthew* tells us, *and many bodies of Saints which ſlept, aroſe, and came out of the graves after his reſurrection, and appeared unto many*; the ſame power *which raiſed Jeſus from the dead*, is able alſo to *quicken our mortal bodies*.

Now in my Text the Apoſtle brings in ſome *ſceptical* perſon objecting againſt this doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, *But ſome man will ſay, how are the dead raiſed up? and with what body do they come?* Two queſtions that every one almoſt is ready to ſtart, eſpecially thoſe who love to cavil at Religion; and it hath not a little puzled ſuch as have undertaken to give a rational account of our faith to give a full and ſatisfactory anſwer to them. " *How can theſe things be?* " How is it poſſible that thoſe bodies " ſhould be raiſed again, and joined to " the ſouls which formerly inhabited " them, which many thouſand years ago " were either buried in the Earth, or " ſwal-

" ſwallowed up in the Sea, or devoured
" by fire; which have been diſſolved in-
" to the ſmalleſt atoms, and thoſe ſcatte-
" red over the face of the earth, and diſ-
" perſed as far aſunder as the Heaven is
" wide; nay which have undergone ten
" thouſand ſeveral changes and tranſmu-
" tations, have fructified the earth, be-
" come the nouriſhment of other animals,
" and thoſe the food again of other men,
" and ſo have been adopted into ſeveral
" other bodies? How is it poſſible that
" all thoſe little particles which made up,
" ſuppoſe, the body of *Abraham*, ſhould
" at the end of the world be again ranged
" and marſhalled together, and unmixt
" from the duſt of other bodies, be all di-
" ſpoſed, into the ſame order, figure and
" poſture they were before, ſo as to make
" the very ſelf-ſame fleſh and bloud which
" his ſoul at his diſſolution forſook? This
" ſeems a *Camel* too big for any conſide-
" ring perſon to ſwallow: he muſt be of
" a very eaſie faith who can digeſt ſuch
" impoſſibilities. *Ezekiel* indeed, when
" *the hand of the Lord was upon him*, and
" *he was carried out in the ſpirit of the*
" *Lord*, thought he was *ſet down in the*
" *midſt of a valley full of dry bones*; and

" that

" that afterwards he *heard a noiſe, and* " *behold a ſhaking*, and *the bones came to-* " *gether, bone to his bone, the ſinews and* " *the fleſh came up upon them, and the skin* " *covered them above, and the breath came* " *into them, and they lived and ſtood upon* " *their feet.* This may paſs well enough " in a Prophetical Viſion, and did hand- " ſomely repreſent the wonderfull reſtau- " ration of the *Jewiſh* People; But that " all this and much more ſhould in truth " come to paſs, that our bones after they " are reſolved into duſt, ſhould really be- " come living men; that all the little " atoms whereof our bodies conſiſted, " howſoever ſcattered, or whereſoever " lodged, ſhould immediately at a gene- " ral ſummons rally and meet again, and " every one challenge and poſſeſs its own " proper place, till at laſt the whole rui- " ned fabrick be perfectly rebuilt, and " that of the very ſelf-ſame ſtuff and ma- " terials whereof it conſiſted before its " fall; that this, I ſay, ſhould ever re- " ally be effected, is ſuch an incredible " thing, that it ſeems to be above the " power of reaſon ſo much as to frame a " conception of it. And therefore we may obſerve that the *Gentiles* did moſt eſpe-

eſpecially boggle at this Article of our *Chriſtian faith*, as we reade in the 17*th* of the *Acts*: when St. *Paul* preached unto the *Athenians* concerning the reſurrection of the dead, the Philoſophers mocked at him, and entertained his doctrine with nothing but ſcoffs and flouts; and indeed it was one of the laſt things that the *Heathens* received into their belief; and it is to this day the chiefeſt objection againſt *Chriſtianity*. *How are the dead raiſed up? and with what body do they come?* In my diſcourſe of theſe words I ſhall doe theſe three things.

I. I ſhall ſhew that the reſurrection of the dead, even in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, as it is commonly underſtood and explained of the very ſelf-ſame body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it impoſſible or incredible.

II. Since it is certain that the body which we ſhall riſe with, though it may be as to ſubſtance the ſame with our terreſtrial body, yet will be ſo much altered and changed in its modes and qualities, that it will be quite another kind of body from what it was before; I ſhall give you

a ſhort account of the difference the Scripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal fleſh. And

III. Laſtly, I ſhall draw ſome practical inferences from the whole.

I. I ſhall ſhew that the reſurrection of the dead, even in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, as it is commonly underſtood and explained of the very ſelf-ſame body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it impoſſible or incredible.

Whether this ſtrict ſenſe of the Article be the true or not, I think I need not determine; it is ſufficient for me to ſhew, that if this be the true ſenſe of it, yet the *Atheiſt* or *Sceptick* hath nothing conſiderable to object againſt it, but what is capable of a fair and eaſie anſwer. However give me leave juſt to lay before you ſome of the principal reaſons and Scriptures upon which it is built and eſtabliſhed. And

1. I think it muſt be acknowledged that this hath been all along the moſt common received opinion amongſt *Chriſtians*, that

that at the laſt day we ſhall riſe again with the very ſame fleſh with which we are clothed in this ſtate, and which we put off at our death: and that our heavenly bodies will not onely conſiſt of the ſame ſubſtance and matter with our earthly, but will be of the ſame conſiſtency and modification, perfect fleſh and bloud, though in ſome properties altered and changed. Moſt of the ancient Fathers of the Church (excepting ſome few that were of a more inquiſitive temper and philoſophical genius than the reſt, as *Origen* and ſome others) did believe and teach, that at the general reſurrection men ſhould be reſtored to the very ſame bodies which they dwelt in here, and which at laſt were laid in the grave: that their bodies ſhould be then as truly the ſame with thoſe they died in, as the bodies of thoſe whom our Saviour raiſed when he was upon earth were the ſame with thoſe they had before; that no other body ſhould be raiſed but that which ſlept, and that as our Saviour *Chriſt* aroſe with his former fleſh and bones and members, ſo we alſo after the reſurrection ſhould have the ſame members we now uſe, the ſame fleſh and bloud and bones.

And that this was the common belief and expectation of all *Chriſtians* in the primitive times, that they ſhould appear again at the general reſurrection with the very ſame bodies they lived in here on earth, will appear from that ſpite and malice which the *Heathens* ſometimes ſhewed to the dead bodies of *Chriſtians*, reducing them to aſhes, and then ſcattering them into the air, or throwing them into rivers, that thereby they might defeat and deprive them of all hopes of a reſurrection: of this *Euſebius* gives us an eminent inſtance out of the Epiſtle of the Churches of *Vienna*, and *Lyons* in *France*, to thoſe in *Aſia* and *Phrygia*, under the Perſecution of *Antoninus Verus*; which gives an account, how that the *Heathens*, after many vain and fruitleſs attempts to ſuppreſs the *Chriſtian Religion*, by inflicting the cruelleſt torments on the Profeſſours of it, which they bravely endured, looking for a joyfull reſurrection; at laſt thought of a way to deprive them, as they fondly imagined, of that great hope which miniſtred ſo much joy and courage to them under the ſevereſt trials; which was by reducing the wrackt and mangled

gled bodies of the ſeveral *Martyrs* into the minuteſt *Atoms*, and then ſcattering them in the great River *Rhodanus*. *Let us now*, ſay they, *ſee whether they can riſe again, and whether their God can help them, and deliver them out of our hands.* Now this is a ſufficient intimation to us, that it was then the known common opinion of *Chriſtians*, that the very ſame body and fleſh which ſuffered and was martyred here on earth, ſhould be raiſed again at the laſt day. And indeed thoſe amongſt the *Ancient Chriſtians* who have undertaken to defend or explain this Article of the reſurrection of the dead, do it moſtly by ſuch principles, arguments and illuſtrations, as do ſuppoſe the very ſame body and fleſh and members to be raiſed again, which the ſoul animated here in this life.

2. This hath not onely been the common received opinion of Chriſtians, but alſo the moſt plain and eaſie notion of a reſurrection ſeems to require it; namely, that the very ſame body which died ſhould be raiſed again. Nothing dies but the body, nothing is corrupted but the body; the ſoul goeth upward, and re-

turns to God, and therefore nothing elſe can be properly ſaid to be raiſed again, but onely that very body which died and was corrupted. If God give to our ſouls at the laſt day a new body, this cannot literally be called the reſurrection of our bodies, becauſe here is no reproduction of the ſame thing that was before, which ſeems to be plainly implied in the word *reſurrection.* Indeed the word is ſometimes uſed otherwiſe, as when a Houſe or Temple that hath been conſumed by fire, is rebuilt on the ſame ground where it formerly ſtood, this is often, though improperly and figuratively called the reſurrection of it, and after the ſame manner do the *Latines* uſe the word *reſurgere*; but yet the moſt proper and literal ſignification of the word *reſurrection,* is, that the ſame fleſh which was ſeparated from the ſoul at the day of death ſhould be again vitally united to it.

3. There are many places of Scripture which in their ſtrict and literal meaning do ſeem plainly to favour this ſenſe of the Article, that the very ſame fleſh ſhall be raiſed again; what more plain and ex-

expreſs, ſaith St. *Hierome*, than that of *Job*? *Job* 19. 26, 27. *Though after my skin worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God, whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf, and my eyes ſhall behold, and not another.* But however plain theſe words may ſeem to be, yet I cannot think that the primary and original meaning of them doth at all relate to the reſurrection, nor were they ever ſo underſtood and interpreted by the *Jews*, as *Grotius* tells us; not but that they might be prophetical of it, and ſo by way of accommodation may be fitly applied to it; but the firſt and moſt eaſie ſenſe of the words ſeems to be this: "After my skin is con-"ſumed, let that which remains of me "likewiſe by piecemeals be deſtroyed, "yet I am confident that, before I die, "with theſe very eyes I ſhall ſee my Re-"deemer, and be reſtored by him to my "former happy ſtate. So that the words are a plain prophecy of his own deliverance, and an high expreſſion of his confident hope in God, that in time he would vindicate his innocence, and bring him out of all his troubles. But if this place will not hold, there are others in the *New Teſtament* of the ſame importance.

St. *Paul* in the 53*d* verſe of this Chapter, ſpeaking of our body, and the glorious change it ſhall undergo at the reſurrection, tells us, that *this corruptible ſhall put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall put on immortality*; now by this *corruptible* and this *mortal* can onely be meant that body which we now carry about with us, and ſhall one day lay down in the duſt. Thus alſo the ſame *Apoſtle* tells us, *Rom.* 8. 11. *He that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken our mortal bodies.* Now that which ſhall be quickned and raiſed to life again, can be nothing elſe but that very body of fleſh which is mortal, and died: though there is ſome queſtion to be made, whether the *quickning our mortal bodies by the ſpirit of Chriſt dwelling in us*, ſhould not rather be underſtood in a *metaphorical* or moral ſenſe, of the firſt reſurrection from the death of ſin to the life of righteouſneſs, than of the general reſurrection at the conſummation of all things.

But farther, the mention and deſcription the Scripture makes of the places from whence thedead ſhall riſe, doth ſeem plainly

ly to intimate, that the ſame bodies which were dead, ſhall revive again. Thus we reade in *Daniel*, Ch. 12. v. 2. *That thoſe that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting death.* Where we may yet farther obſerve, that the Metaphor of *ſleeping* and *awaking*, by which our death and reſurrection is here expreſſed, doth ſeem to imply, that when we riſe again, our bodies will be as much the ſame with thoſe we lived in, as they are when we awake, the ſame with thoſe we had before we laid our ſelves down to ſleep. Thus again it is ſaid in St. *John*'s Goſpel, *Chap. 5. verſes* 28, and 29. *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.* And in the *Revelations*, Chap. 20. verſe 13. *And the ſea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell*, that is, the grave, *delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.* Now if the ſame fleſh ſhall not be raiſed again, what need is there of ranſacking the graves at the

the end of the word? the Sea can give up no other bodies but the ſame which it received in; nor can the Grave deliver up any, but onely thoſe that were laid therein: if it were not neceſſary that we ſhould riſe with the very ſame bodies, the graves need not be opened, but our fleſh might be permitted to reſt there for ever. To this may be added, that St. *Paul* tells us in the 3*d Chapter* of the Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, verſe 21. that our Saviour *ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body*. Now this vile *body* can be no other than this fleſh and bloud which we are now cloathed with, reſtored to life again.

4. If we conſider the ſeveral inſtances and examples either of thoſe who did immediately aſcend up into Heaven, or of thoſe who after death were reſtored to life again, they all ſeem plainly to confirm this opinion, that at the laſt day we ſhall riſe again with the very ſame fleſh and bloud which we had here. *Enoch* and *Elias* of old were tranſlated into Heaven in their terreſtrial bodies; and therefore may be ſuppoſed now to live there with the ſame fleſh and parts they had

had when they were here upon earth. And thoſe three that were raiſed from the dead in the *Old Teſtament*, and thoſe that were recalled to life by our Saviour, or accompanied him at his reſurrection, all appeared again in the very ſame bodies they had before their diſſolution: and theſe were examples and types of the general reſurrection, and therefore our reſurrection muſt reſemble theirs, and we alſo muſt appear at the laſt day with the ſame bodies we lived in here. Even our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, who was the *firſt fruits of them that ſlept*, did raiſe his own body, according to that prediction of his. *Deſtroy this Temple, and in three days I will build it up again.* Nay he appeared to his Diſciples with the very prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and with all the other marks of his crucifixion; *Behold my hands and my feet*, ſays he, *that it is I my ſelf; Handle me, and ſee, for a ſpirit hath not fleſh and bones, as ye ſee me have:* from whence it ſeems to follow, that we in our reſurrection ſhall be conformable to our Saviour, and reſume the very ſame bodies that were laid in the Sepulchre.

5. And

5. And Laſtly, It is farther urged by ſome of the *Ancients* for a proof of the reſurrection of the ſame body, that the exact juſtice and righteouſneſs of God doth require it; that God's juſtice, I mean that which conſiſts in the equal diſpenſation of rewards and puniſhments, will ſeem to be much obſcured, at leaſt will not be ſo illuſtriouſly manifeſted and diſplayed to the world, unleſs the ſame body of fleſh be raiſed again; that ſo that which was here the conſtant partner with the ſoul in all her actions, whether good or evil, may alſo hereafter ſhare with her in her rewards or puniſhments. It ſeems but equal that we ſhould be puniſhed in the ſame body in which we ſinned; and that that very fleſh in which we pleaſed God ſhould be exalted and glorified at the laſt day, and receive a juſt recompence of reward for all the trouble and hardſhip it underwent in this life.

Thus I have given you a brief account of this ſtricteſt ſenſe of the Article of the Reſurrection, namely, that the very ſelf-ſame fleſh and bloud which make up our bodies here on earth, ſhall be raiſed again at the

the laſt day; and after it hath been changed and glorified by the power and ſpirit of *Chriſt* (I ſpeak onely of the bodies of good men) ſhall aſcend up into Heaven, and there live and dwell for ever in the preſence of God. I come now to ſhew that there is nothing in all this impoſſible or incredible: which I ſhall do by proving theſe three things.

1. That it is poſſible for God to obſerve and diſtinguiſh and preſerve unmixt from all other bodies the particular duſt and *atoms* into which the ſeveral bodies of men are diſſolved, and to recollect and unite them together how far ſoever diſperſed aſunder.

2. That God can form that duſt ſo recollected together, of which the body did formerly conſiſt, into the ſame body it was before. And

3. That when he hath made this body, he can enliven it, and make it the ſame living man, by uniting it to the ſame ſoul and ſpirit that uſed formerly to inhabit there. It cannot be denied, but that theſe three things do expreſs the whole

whole of the reſurrection of our fleſh in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, and none of theſe are impoſſible.

1. God can obſerve and diſtinguiſh and preſerve unmixt from all other bodies the particular duſt and *atoms* into which the ſeveral bodies of men are diſſolved, and recollect and unite them together, how far ſoever diſperſed aſunder. God is infinite in wiſedom, power and knowledge, he *knoweth the number of the ſtars, and calleth them all by their names; he meaſures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and metes out the heavens with a ſpan, and comprehends the duſt of the earth in a meaſure; he numbers the hairs of our head, and not ſo much as a ſparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge:* he can tell the number of the ſands of the Seaſhore, as the Heathens uſed to expreſs the immenſity of his knowledge; and is it at all incredible that ſuch an infinite underſtanding ſhould diſtinctly know the ſeveral particles of duſt into which the bodies of men are mouldred, and plainly diſcern to whom they belong, and obſerve the various changes they undergo in their paſſage through ſeveral bodies? Why ſhould

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it be thought ſtrange, that he who at firſt formed us, *whoſe eyes did ſee our ſubſtance yet being imperfect, and in whoſe book all our members were written; from whom our ſubſtance was not hid, when we were made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt parts of the earth*, ſhould know every part of our bodies, and every atome whereof they are compoſed? The curious artiſt knows every pin and part of the Watch or Machine which he frames, and if the little Engine ſhould fall in pieces, and all the parts of it lie in the greateſt diſorder and confuſion, yet he can ſoon rally them together, and as eaſily diſtinguiſh one from another, as if every one had its particular mark; he knows the uſe of every part, can readily aſſign to each its proper place, and exactly diſpoſe them into the ſame figure and order they were in before: and can we think that the *Almighty Architect* of the world, whoſe workmanſhip we are, doth not know whereof we are made, or is not acquainted with the ſeveral parts and materials of which this earthly tabernacle of ours is framed and compoſed? The ſeveral corporeal beings that now conſtitute this Univerſe, at the firſt creation of the

the world lay all confuſed in a vaſt heap of rude and indigeſted *Chaos*; till by the voice of the Omnipotent they were ſeparated one from the other, and framed into thoſe diſtinct bodies, whereof this beautifull and orderly world doth conſiſt: and why may not the ſame power at the conſummation of all things, out of the ruines and rubbiſh of the world, collect the ſeveral reliques of our corrupted bodies, reduce them each to their proper places, and reſtore them to their primitive ſhapes and figures, and frame them into the ſame individual bodies they were parts of before? All the atoms and particles into which mens bodies are at laſt diſſolved, however they may ſeem to us to lie careleſly ſcattered over the face of the earth, yet are ſafely lodged by God's wiſe diſpoſal in ſeveral receptacles and repoſitories till the day of reſtitution of all things; *in aquis*, *in ignibus*, *in alitibus*, *in beſtiis*, ſaith *Tertullian*, they are preſerved in *the waters*, in *birds* and *beaſts*, till the ſound of the laſt trumpet ſhall ſummon them, and recall them all to their former habitations.

But

But the chiefeſt and moſt uſual objection againſt what I am now pleading for is this, That it may ſometimes happen that ſeveral mens bodies may conſiſt of the very ſelf-ſame matter: for the bodies of men are oftentimes devoured by beaſts and fiſhes, and other animals, and the fleſh of theſe is afterwards eaten by other men, and becomes part of their nouriſhment, till at laſt the ſame particles of matter come to belong to ſeveral bodies; and it is impoſſible that at the reſurrection they ſhould be united to them all. Or to expreſs it ſhorter, it is reported of ſome whole Nations, that they devour the bodies of other men, and feed upon humane fleſh; ſo that theſe muſt neceſſarily borrow great part of their bodies of other men: and if that which was part of one man's body, comes afterwards to be part of another man's, how can both riſe at the laſt day with the very ſelf-ſame bodies they had here? But to this it may be eaſily replied, that but a very ſmall and inconſiderable part of that which is eaten, and deſcends into the ſtomach, turns into nouriſhment; the far greater part goes away by excretions

and perſpirations. So that it is not at all impoſſible but that God Almighty, who watcheth over all things by his providence, and governs them by his power, may ſo order the matter, that what is really part of one man's body, though eaten by another, yet ſhall never come to be part of his nouriſhment; or elſe, if it doth nouriſh him, and conſequently becomes part of his body, that it ſhall wear off again, and ſometime before his death be divided and ſeparated from it, that ſo it may remain in a condition to be reſtored to him who firſt laid it down in the duſt. And the like may be ſaid of *Men-eaters*, if any ſuch there be, that God by his wiſe providence may take care, either that they ſhall not be at all nouriſhed by other mens fleſh which they ſo inhumanely devour, or if they be nouriſhed by it, and ſome particles of matter, which formerly belonged to other men, be adopted into their bodies, yet that they ſhall yield them up again before they die, that they may be in a capacity of being reſtored at the laſt day to their right owners.

But

But perhaps it may ſeem to ſome unworthy of God, and beneath his divine Majeſty, to attend to ſuch little things, and to concern himſelf about ſuch mean and trivial matters; or inconſiſtent with his eaſe and happineſs, to trouble himſelf with ſuch a perplext and intricate buſineſs, as curiouſly to mark and obſerve all the particles of duſt into which the ſeveral bodies of men are diſſolved, and exactly to diſtinguiſh one from another, and to preſerve them entire and unmixt, and at laſt to reſtore them all to their old bodies. But ſuch perſons ſhould have a care, leſt under pretence of pleading for God's honour and glory, they really leſſen him, and derogate from all his other perfections. It is the great excellency and perfection of the divine providence that it extends it ſelf to all, even to the leaſt things, and that nothing is exempted from its care and influence. And to fanſie that to govern the world is a burthen to God, is ſurely to entertain mean and unworthy conceptions of him, and to judge of him by the ſame rules and meaſures we do of our ſelves. It is very unreaſonable, becauſe we are of ſuch

weak and frail natures, as that a little buſineſs and employment preſently tires us, to think the ſame of God Almighty, as if it were any trouble to him, or at all interrupted his infinite pleaſure and happineſs to take care of the world, and order and manage the ſeveral affairs of it.

2. Of this duſt, thus preſerved and collected together, God can eaſily re-make and rebuild the very ſame bodies which were diſſolved. And that this is poſſible muſt be acknowledged by all that believe the hiſtory of the creation of the world, that God formed the firſt man *Adam* of the duſt of the ground: if the body of man be duſt after death, it is no other than what it was originally; and the ſame power that at firſt made it of duſt, may as eaſily re-make it when it is reduced into the ſame duſt again.

Nay this is no more wonderfull than the formation of an humane body in the womb, which is a thing that we have daily experience of, which without doubt is as great a miracle, and as ſtrange an inſtance of the divine power, as the reſurrection of it can poſſibly be: and were it not

not ſo common and uſual a thing, we ſhould as hardly be brought to believe it poſſible, that ſuch a beautifull fabrick as the body of a man is, with nerves and bones and fleſh and veins and bloud, and the ſeveral other parts whereof it conſiſts, ſhould be raiſed out of thoſe principles of which we ſee it is made, as now we are, that hereafter it ſhould be rebuilt, when it is crumbled into duſt. Had we onely heard or read of the wonderfull formation of the body of man, we ſhould have been as ready to ask, *how are men made? and with what bodies are they born?* as now we are, when we hear of the reſurrection, *How are the dead raiſed up? and with what bodies do they come?*

3. When God hath raiſed again the ſame body out of the duſt into which it was diſſolved, he can enliven it, and make it the ſame living man, by uniting it to the ſame ſoul and ſpirit which uſed formerly to inhabit there. And this we cannot with the leaſt ſhew of reaſon pretend impoſſible to be done, becauſe we muſt grant that it hath been already often done. We have ſeveral undoubted examples of it in thoſe whom the Prophets of

old, and our blessed Saviour and his Apostles raised from the dead. Nay our Saviour himself, after he was dead and buried, rose again, and appeared alive unto his Disciples and others, and was sufficiently known and owned by those who had accompanied him, and conversed with him for many years together, and that not presently, but after long doubting and hesitation, upon undeniable conviction and proof, that he was the very same person they had seen expiring upon the Cross.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew you that in the strictest notion of the resurrection there is nothing that is absurd or impossible, or above the power of such an infinite being as God is. The onely thing I know of that can with any pretence of reason be objected against what I have discoursed upon this head, is this, that this way of arguing from God's omnipotency is very fallacious, and hath been often much abused: for under this pretence that nothing is impossible to an infinite power, all the *Rabbinical* and *Mahumetan* Fables, or, which are as incredible, all the *Popish Legends* may be ob-

obtruded on us for *Authentick Hiſtories*; ſince there is nothing contained in them that is abſolutely above or beyond God's power to effect, if he pleaſes to exert it. Whence ſome of the *Fathers* have obſerved, that the Omnipotency of God was the great ſanctuary of *Hereticks*, to which they always betook themſelves when they were baffled by reaſon. And indeed ſo much is certainly true, that God's Omnipotency alone is no good argument to prove the truth of any thing; for without doubt there are an infinite number of things which are poſſible to be done or made, which yet God in his infinite wiſedom never thought fit to exercise his power about, nor perhaps ever will: and therefore we ought not to conclude, becauſe God can raiſe us again with the very ſame bodies we have here, that therefore he will doe ſo. But ſuppoſing that God hath expreſly revealed and declared that he will doe it, from the conſideration of his infinite power, we are bound (however impoſſible it may ſeem to us; ſo long as it doth not plainly imply a contradiction) not to doubt of the truth of it, but firmly to believe, that he that hath promiſed, can

alſo perform. We muſt firſt therefore be aſſured that it is the will of God to raiſe again the ſame fleſh which was laid in the grave, and then we may ſafely have recourſe to the Omnipotency of God to confirm and eſtabliſh our faith of it.

I conclude this head therefore with that queſtion of St. *Paul's*, *Acts* 26. 8. *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* The change from death to life is not ſo great as that from nothing into being; and if we believe that God Almighty by the word of his power at firſt made the heavens and the earth of no pre-exiſtent matter, what reaſon have we to doubt, but that the ſame God *by that mighty power whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf*, can alſo raiſe to life again thoſe who were formerly alive, and have not yet wholly ceaſed to be. And though we cannot anſwer all the difficulties and objections which the wit of men (whoſe intereſt it is that their ſouls ſhould die with their bodies, and both periſh together) hath found out to puzzle this doctrine with: though we cannot fully ſatisfy our minds and reaſons about the

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manner how it ſhall be done, or the nature of thoſe bodies we ſhall riſe with, yet this ought not in the leaſt to ſhake or weaken our belief of this moſt important Article of our *Chriſtian faith.* Is it not ſufficient that an Almighty Being, with whom nothing is impoſſible, hath ſolemnly promiſed and paſt his word, that he will re-animate and re-enliven our mortal bodies, and after death raiſe us to life again? Let thoſe who preſume to mock at this glorious hope and expectation of all good men, and are continually expoſing this doctrine, and raiſing objections againſt it, firſt try their skill upon the ordinary and daily appearances of nature, which they have every day before their eyes; let them rationally ſolve and explain every thing that happens in this world, of which themſelves are witneſſes, before they think to move us from the belief of the reſurrection by raiſing ſome duſt and difficulties about it, when Omnipotency it ſelf ſtands engaged for the performance of it. Can they tell me how their own bodies were framed and faſhioned, and curiouſly wrought? Can they give me a plain and ſatisfactory account by what orderly

derly steps and degrees this glorious and stately structure, consisting of so many several parts and members, which discovers so much delicate workmanship and rare contrivance, was at first erected? How was the first drop of bloud made, and how came the heart and veins and arteries to receive and contain it? of what, and by what means were the nerves and fibres made; what fixt those little strings in their due places and situations, and fitted and adapted them for those several uses for which they serve? what distinguisht and separated the brain from the other parts of the body, and placed it in the head, and filled it with animal spirits to move and animate the whole body? How came the body to be fenced with bones and sinews, to be cloathed with skin and flesh, distinguisht into various muscles? let them but answer me these and all the other questions I could put to them about the formation of their own body, and then I will willingly undertake to solve all the objections and difficulties that they can raise concerning the resurrection of it. But if they cannot give any account of the formation of that body they now live in, but are forced

ced to have recourſe to the infinite power and wiſedom of the firſt cauſe, the great and ſovereign orderer and diſpoſer of all things; let them know that the ſame power is able alſo to quicken and enliven it again after it is rotted and returned unto duſt: we muſt believe very few things, if this be a ſufficient reaſon for our doubting of any thing, that there are ſome things belonging to it which we cannot perfectly comprehend, or give a rational account of. In this ſtate our conceptions and reaſonings about the things that belong to the future and inviſible world are very childiſh and vain; and we do but gueſs and talk at random, whenever we venture beyond what God hath revealed to us. Let us not therefore perplex and puzzle our ſelves with thoſe difficulties which have been raiſed concerning this doctrine of the reſurrection; for it is no abſurdity to ſuppoſe that an infinite power may effect ſuch things as ſeem wholly impoſſible to ſuch finite beings as we are; but rather let us hold faſt to what is plainly revealed concerning it, namely, that all thoſe who love and fear God ſhall be raiſed again after death the ſame men they were before, and live for

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ever with God in unſpeakable happineſs both of body and ſoul.

Thus I have endeavoured to ſhew the poſſibility of a reſurrection in the ſtricteſt ſenſe; I now proceed to the ſecond thing I propounded, which was

II. (Since it is certain that the body we ſhall riſe with, though it may be as to ſubſtance the ſame with our terreſtrial body, yet will be ſo altered and changed in its modes and qualities, that it will be quite another kind of body from what it was before.) To give you a ſhort account of the difference the Scripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal fleſh.

But before I doe this, I ſhall premiſe this one thing; that all our conceptions of the future ſtate are yet very dark and imperfect. We are ſufficiently aſſured that we ſhall all after death be alive again, the very ſame men and perſons we were here; and that thoſe that have done good ſhall receive glory and honour and eternal life. But the nature of that joy and happineſs which is provided for

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us in the other world is not ſo plainly revealed; this we know, that it vaſtly ſurpaſſes all our imaginations, and that we are not able in this imperfect ſtate to fanſie or conceive the greatneſs of it; we have not words big enough fully to expreſs it; or if it were deſcribed to us, our underſtandings are too ſhort and narrow to comprehend it. And therefore the Scriptures, from which alone we have all we know of a future ſtate, deſcribe it either firſt negatively, by propounding to us the ſeveral evils and inconveniences we ſhall then be totally freed from; or elſe ſecondly by comparing the glory that ſhall then be revealed with thoſe things which men do moſt value and admire here: whence it is called an *inheritance*, a *kingdom*, a *throne*, a *crown*, a *ſceptre*, a *rich treaſure*, a *river of pleaſures*, a *ſplendid robe*, and an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. All which do not ſignify to us the ſtrict nature of that happineſs which is promiſed us in another world, which doth not conſiſt in any outward ſenſible joys or pleaſures: But theſe being the beſt and greateſt things which this world can bleſs us with, which men do ordinarily moſt admire and value, and covet the poſſeſ-

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ſion of, are made uſe of to ſet out to us the tranſcendent bleſſedneſs of another life, though indeed it is quite of another kind, and infinitely greater than the greateſt worldly happineſs. Theſe are onely little compariſons to help our weak apprehenſions and childiſh fancies; but we ſhall never truly and fully know the glories of the other world, till we come to enjoy them. *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be:* from the deſcription which the Scripture gives of the other world, as from a Map of an unknown Countrey, we may frame in our minds a rude confuſed idea and conception of it; and from thence, as *Moſes* from the top of Mount *Piſgah*, may take ſome little imperfect proſpect of the land of promiſe; but we ſhall never have a complete notion of it, till we our ſelves are entred into it. However, ſo much of our future happineſs is revealed to us, as may be ſufficient to raiſe our thoughts and affections above the empty ſhadows and fading beauties, and flattering glories of this lower world: to make us ſenſible how mean and trifling our preſent joys and ſatisfactions are, and to excite and engage our beſt and moſt hearty endeavours towards the attainment

ment of it, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in this life; though all that can be said, or we can possibly know of it, comes infinitely short of what one day we shall feel and perceive, and be really possessed of.

Having premised this, I come to consider what change shall be wrought in our bodies at the resurrection, which is no small part of our future happiness: now this change, according to the account the Scriptures give of it, will consist chiefly in these four things. 1. That our bodies shall be raised *immortal* and *incorruptible*; 2. that they shall be raised in *glory*; 3. that they shall be raised in *power*; 4. that they shall be raised *spiritual bodies*. All which properties of our glorified bodies are mentioned by St. *Paul* in this Chapter, *verses* 42, 43, 44. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.* And the explication of these words will give us the difference between the glori-

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fied body which we ſhall have in Heaven, and that mortal fleſh and vile earth which we are now burthened with.

1. The bodies which we ſhall have at the reſurrection will be immortal and incorruptible; verſe 53. *For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality.* Now theſe words *immortal* and *incorruptible* do not onely ſignify that we ſhall die no more, for in that ſenſe the bodies of the damned are alſo raiſed *immortal* and *incorruptible*, ſince they muſt live for ever, though it be in intolerable pain and miſery: but they denote farther a perfect freedom from all thoſe bodily evils which ſin hath brought into the world, and from whatever is penal, afflictive, or uneaſie to us; that our bodies ſhall not be ſubject to pain or diſeaſes, or thoſe other inconveniences to which they are now daily obnoxious. This is called in Scripture the *redemption of our bodies*, the freeing them from all thoſe evils and maladies which they are here ſubject unto. Were we at the general reſurrection to receive the ſame bodies again, ſubject to thoſe frailties and miſeries which in this ſtate we

we are forced to wreſtle with, I much doubt whether a wiſe conſidering perſon, were it left to his choice, would willingly take it again; whether he would not chuſe to let it lie ſtill rotting in the grave, rather than conſent to be again fettered down and bound faſt to all eternity to ſuch a cumberſome clod of earth: ſuch a reſurrection as this would indeed be what *Plotinus* calls it, ἀνάϛασις εἰς ἄλλον ὕπνον, *a reſurrection to another ſleep:* it would look more like a condemnation to death again, than a reſurrection to life.

The beſt thing that we can ſay of this earthly houſe and tabernacle of clay, the tomb and ſepulchre of our ſouls, is, that it is a ruinous building, and it will not be long before it be diſſolved and tumble into duſt: that it is not our home, or reſting place, but that we look for another houſe, *not made with hands eternal in the heavens*; that we ſhall not always be confined to this dolefull priſon, but that in a little time we ſhall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and being diſengaged and ſet free from this burthen of fleſh, ſhall be admitted *into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Alas! what frail and brittle things are theſe bodies of ours? How ſoon are they diſordered and diſcompoſed? To what a troop of diſeaſes, pains, and other infirmities are they continually liable? And how doth the leaſt diſtemper or weakneſs diſturb and annoy our minds, interrupt our eaſe and reſt, and make life it ſelf a burthen to us? of how many ſeveral parts and members do our bodies conſiſt? and if any one of theſe be diſordered, the whole man ſuffers with it: If but one of thoſe ſlender veins or tender membranes, or little nerves and fibres, whereof our fleſh is made up, be either contracted or extended beyond its due proportion, or obſtructed, or corroded by any ſharp humour, or broken; what torment and anguiſh doth it create? How doth it pierce our ſouls with grief and pain? Nay when our bodies are at their beſt, what pains do we take, to what drudgeries are we forced to ſubmit, to ſerve their neceſſities, to provide for their ſuſtenance, and ſupply their wants; to repair their decays, to preſerve them in health, and to keep them tenantable, in ſome tolerable plight and fitneſs for the ſoul's uſe? We paſs away our days with

labour

labour and ſorrow in mean and ſervile employments, and are continually buſying our ſelves about ſuch trifling matters, as are beneath a rational and immortal ſpirit to ſtoop to, or be ſolicitous about; And all this onely to ſupply our ſelves with food and raiment, and other conveniences for this mortal life, and to make proviſion for this vile contemptible fleſh, that it may want nothing that it craves or deſires. And what time we can ſpare from our labour, is taken up in reſting and refreſhing our tired and jaded bodies, and giving them ſuch recruits as are neceſſary to fit them for work again, and reſtore them to their former ſtrength and vigour. How are we forced every night to enter into the confines of death, even to ceaſe to be, at leaſt to paſs away ſo many hours without any uſefull or rational thoughts, onely to keep theſe carkaſſes in repair, and make them fit to undergo the drudgeries of the enſuing day? In a word, ſo long as theſe frail, weak and dying bodies, ſubject to ſo many evils and inconveniences both from within and without, are ſo cloſely linkt and united to our ſouls, that not ſo much as any one part of them can

ſuffer, but our ſouls muſt be affected with it; it is impoſſible that we ſhould enjoy much eaſe or reſt, or happineſs in this life, when it is in the power of ſo many thouſand contingencies to rob us of it. But our hope and comfort is, that the time will ſhortly come, when we ſhall be delivered from this burthen of fleſh: *When God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain, for the former things are paſſed away: When we ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; neither ſhall the ſun light on us, nor any heat; for the lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed us, and ſhall lead us into living fountains of waters.* Oh when ſhall we arrive to thoſe happy regions, where no complaints were ever heard, where we ſhall all enjoy a conſtant and uninterrupted health and vigour both of body and mind, and never more be expoſed to pinching froſts or ſcorching heats, or any of thoſe inconveniences which incommode this preſent pilgrimage? When we have once paſſed from death to life, we ſhall be perfectly eaſed of all that troubleſome care of our bodies, which

now

now takes up ſo much of our time and thoughts: we ſhall be ſet free from all thoſe tireſome labours and ſervile drudgeries which here we are forced to undergo for the maintenance and ſupport of our lives; and ſhall enjoy a perfect health, without being vexed with any nauſeous medicines, or tedious courſes of phyſick for the preſervation of it. Thoſe robes of light and glory which we ſhall be cloathed with at the reſurrection of the juſt, will not ſtand in need of thoſe carefull proviſions, or crave thoſe ſatisfactions which it is ſo grievous to us here either to procure or be without. *But they*, as our Saviour tells us, St. *Luke* 20. verſe 35, 36. *which ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more*; for they are ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to Angels*: they ſhall live ſuch a life as the holy Angels do. Whence *Tertullian* calls the body we ſhall have at the reſurrection *carnem Angelificatam*, *Angelified fleſh*, which ſhall neither be ſubject to thoſe weakneſſes and decays, nor want that daily ſuſtenance and continual recruit which theſe mortal bodies cannot ſubſiſt

without. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them.* This is that perfect and complete happineſs which all good men ſhall enjoy in the other world; which, according to an Heathen Poet, may be thus briefly ſummed up. *Mens ſana in corpore ſano, a mind free from all trouble and guilt in a body free from all pains and diſeaſes.* Thus our mortal bodies ſhall be raiſed *immortal*; they ſhall not onely by the power of God be always preſerved from death, for ſo the bodies we have now, if God pleaſes, may become immortal; but the nature of them ſhall be ſo wholly changed and altered, that they ſhall not retain the ſame ſeeds or principles of mortality and corruption; ſo that they who are once cloathed with them, as our Saviour tells us, *cannot die any more.*

2. Our bodies ſhall be raiſed in glory. *Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father*, Matt. 13. 43. Our heavenly bodies in brightneſs and glory ſhall contend with the ſplendour of the Sun it ſelf: A reſemblance of this we have in the luſtre of *Moſes's face*,

*face*, which, after he had converſed with God in the Mount, did ſhine ſo gloriouſly, that the children of *Iſrael* were afraid to come near him, and therefore when he ſpake to them, he was forced to caſt a veil over his face to cloud and eclipſe the glory of it: And that extraordinary and miraculous majeſty of St. *Stephen*'s countenance ſeems to be a preſage of that future glory which our heavenly bodies ſhall be cloathed with: *Acts* 6. 15. *And all that ſate in the Council looking ſtedfaſtly on him, ſaw his face as it had been the face of an Angel.* That is, they ſaw a great light and ſplendour about him; and if the bodies of Saints do ſometimes appear ſo glorious here on earth, how will they ſhine and glitter in the other world, when they ſhall be made like unto *Chriſt*'s own glorious body? for ſo St. *Paul* tells us, that *Chriſt will faſhion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body.* Now how glorious and ſplendid the body of *Chriſt* is, we may gheſs by the viſions of the two great Apoſtles, St. *Peter* and St. *Paul.*

The former of them, when he ſaw the transfiguration of our Saviour, when *his*

*face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment became ſhining, and white as ſnow*, was at the ſight of it ſo tranſported and overcharged with joy and admiration, that he was in a manner beſides himſelf, for he knew not what he ſaid. When our Saviour diſcovered but a little of that glory which he now poſſeſſes, and will in due time communicate to his followers, yet that little of it made the place ſeem a paradiſe: and the Diſciples were ſo taken with the ſight of it, that they thought they could wiſh for nothing better than always to live in ſuch pure light, and enjoy ſo beautifull a ſight. *It is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles:* here let us fix and abide for ever. And if they thought this ſo great a happineſs, onely to be where ſuch heavenly bodies were preſent, and to behold them with their eyes, how much greater happineſs muſt they enjoy, who are admitted to dwell in ſuch glorious manſions, and are themſelves cloathed with ſo much brightneſs and ſplendour?

The other appearance of our bleſſed Saviour after his aſcenſion into Heaven to St. *Paul* as he was travelling to *Damaſcus*, was

was ſo glorious, that it put out his eyes; his ſenſes were not able to bear a light ſo refulgent: ſuch glorious creatures will our Lord make us all, if we continue his faithfull ſervants and followers; and we ſhall be ſo wonderfully changed, by the word of his power, from what we are in this vile ſtate, that the bodies we now have will not be able ſo much as to bear the ſight and preſence of thoſe bodies which ſhall be given us at the reſurrection.

Now this excellency of our heavenly bodies the *Schoolmen* fanſie will ariſe in a great meaſure from the happineſs of our ſouls. The unſpeakable joy and happineſs which our ſouls ſhall then enjoy, will break through our bodies, and be conſpicuous, and ſhine forth in the brightneſs of our countenances, and illuſtrate them with beauty and ſplendour; as the joy of the ſoul, even in this life, hath ſome influence upon the body, and makes an imperfect impreſſion upon the countenance, by rendring it more ſerene and chearfull than otherwiſe it would be: as *Solomon* tells us, *Eccles.* 8. 1. *That a man's wiſedom maketh his face to ſhine.*

Vertue

Vertue and goodneſs purifies and exalts a man's natural temper, and makes his very looks more clear and brisk.

3. Our bodies ſhall be *raiſed in power*. This is that which the *Schools* call the agility of our heavenly bodies, the nimbleneſs of their motion, by which they ſhall be rendred moſt obedient and able inſtruments of the ſoul. In this ſtate our bodies are no better than clogs and fetters which confine and reſtrain the freedom of the ſoul, and hinder it in all her operations; *The corruptible body*, as it is in the wiſedom of *Solomon*, *preſſeth down the ſoul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that muſeth upon many things*. Our dull, ſluggiſh and unactive bodies are often unable, oftner unready and backward to execute the orders, and obey the commands of our ſouls; ſo that they are rather hindrances to the ſoul, than any-ways uſefull or ſerviceable to her. But in the other life, as the Prophet *Iſaiah* tells us, *Iſaiah* 40. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings as Eagles; they ſhall run, and not be weary; and they ſhall walk, and not faint*: or as another

another expreſſes it; *They ſhall ſhine, and run too and fro like ſparks amongſt the ſtubble*; the ſpeed of their motion ſhall be like that of devouring fire in an heap of dry ſtubble, and the height of it ſhall ſurpaſs the towring flight of the Eagle: for they ſhall *meet the Lord in the air*, when he comes to judgment, and afterwards mount up with him into the third and higheſt Heavens. This earthly body is continually groveling on the ground, ſlow and heavy in all its motions, liſtleſs, and ſoon tired with action; and the ſoul that dwells in it is forced, as it were, to drag and hale it along; but our heavenly bodies ſhall be as free, as active and nimble as our very thoughts are.

4. And Laſtly, Our bodies ſhall be *raiſed ſpiritual bodies*; not of a ſpiritual ſubſtance, for then the words would imply a contradiction; it being impoſſible that the ſame thing ſhould be both a ſpiritual and a bodily ſubſtance. But ſpiritual is here oppoſed, not to corporeal, but to natural or animal; and by it is expreſt, (as it is ordinarily interpreted) the ſubtilty and tenuity and purity of our heavenly bodies. But I would rather explain

plain it thus. In this ſtate our ſpirits are forced to ſerve our bodies, and to attend their leiſure, and do mightily depend upon them in moſt of their operations; but on the contrary, in the other world our bodies ſhall wholly ſerve our ſpirits, and miniſter unto them, and depend upon them. So that by a natural body, I underſtand a body fitted for this lower and ſenſible world, for this earthly ſtate; by a ſpiritual body, ſuch an one as is ſuited and accommodated to a ſpiritual ſtate, to an inviſible world, to ſuch a life as the Saints and Angels lead in Heaven. And indeed this is the principal difference between this mortal body, and our glorified body. This *fleſh*, which now we are ſo apt to dote upon, is one of the greateſt and moſt dangerous enemies we have, and therefore is defied and renounced by all *Chriſtians* in their *baptiſm*, as well as the *world* and the *Devil*. It continually tempts and ſolicits us to evil; every ſenſe is a ſnare to us, and all its luſts and appetites are inordinate and inſatiable; it is impatient of *Chriſt*'s yoke, and refuſeth diſcipline; it is ungovernable, and often rebelleth againſt reaſon; and *the law in our members warreth againſt the law of our minds*,

*minds, and brings us into captivity to the law of ſin which is in our members*, and *when the ſpirit is willing, the fleſh is weak*; ſo that the beſt men are forced to keep it under, and uſe it hardly, leſt it ſhould betray them into folly and miſery. We are now in a ſtate of warfare, and muſt always be upon our guard and watch, continually arming and defending our ſelves againſt the aſſaults of the fleſh, and all its violent and impetuous motions. How doth it hinder us in all our religious devotions? How ſoon doth it jade our minds when employed in any divine or ſpiritual meditations; or how eaſily by its bewitching and enchanting pleaſure doth it divert them from ſuch noble exerciſes? So that St. *Paul* breaks forth into this ſad and mournfull complaint; *Rom.* 7. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* Who ſhall? Death ſhall. That ſhall give us a full and final deliverance. When once we have obtained the reſurrection unto life, we ſhall not any more feel thoſe luſtings of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, which are here ſo troubleſome and uneaſie to us; our fleſh ſhall then ceaſe to vex our ſouls with its evil inclinations, immoderate deſires,

ſires, and unreaſonable paſſions; But being its ſelf ſpiritualized, purified, exalted and freed from this earthly groſneſs, and all manner of pollution, ſhall become a moſt fit and proper inſtrument of the ſoul in all her divine and heavenly employments. It ſhall not be weary of ſinging praiſes unto God Almighty through infinite Ages. It ſhall want no reſpite or refreſhment, but its meat and drink ſhall be to doe the will of God.

In theſe things chiefly conſiſts the difference between thoſe bodies which we ſhall have at the reſurrection, and this mortal fleſh; which we can but very imperfectly either conceive or expreſs: but yet from what hath been diſcourſed on this ſubject, it doth ſufficiently appear that a glorified body is infinitely more excellent and deſireable than that vile and contemptible fleſh which we now carry about with us. The onely thing remaining is,

III. And Laſtly, to draw ſome practical inferences from all I have ſaid on this ſubject. I ſhall but juſt mention theſe five, and leave the improvement of them to your own private meditations.

1. From

1. From what I have ſaid, we may learn the beſt way of fitting and preparing our ſelves to live in thoſe heavenly and ſpiritual bodies which ſhall be beſtowed upon us at the reſurrection; which is by cleanſing and purifying our ſouls ſtill more and more from all fleſhly filthineſs, and weaning our ſelves by degrees from this earthly body, and all ſenſual pleaſures and delights. We ſhould begin in this life to looſen and untie the knot between our ſouls and this mortal fleſh, to refine our affections, and raiſe them from things below, to things above; to take off our hearts, and leiſurely to diſengage them from things preſent and ſenſible, and to uſe and accuſtome our ſelves to think of, and converſe with things ſpiritual and inviſible: that ſo our ſouls, when they are ſeparated from this earthly body, may be prepared and diſpoſed to actuate and inform a pure and ſpiritual one, as having before-hand taſted and reliſhed ſpiritual delights and pleaſures, and been in ſome degree acquainted with thoſe objects which ſhall then be preſented to us. A ſoul wholly immerſed and buried in this earthly body is not at all fit and qualified for

for thoſe celeſtial and glorious manſions which God hath provided for us: an earthly ſenſual mind is ſo much wedded to bodily pleaſures, as that it cannot enjoy its ſelf without them, and is incapable of taſting or reliſhing any other, though really greater, and infinitely to be preferred before them. Nay ſuch perſons as mind onely the concerns of the body, and are wholly led by its motions and inclinations; as do, σωματοῦν τὴν ψυχὴν, as it were *embody their ſouls*, would eſteem it a great unhappineſs to be cloathed with a ſpiritual and heavenly body: it would be like cloathing a beggar in princely apparel. Such glorious bodies would be uneaſie to them; they would not know how to behave themſelves in them; they would e'en be glad to retire, and put on their rags again. But now by denying the ſolicitations of our fleſh, and contradicting its luſts and appetites, and weaning our ſelves from bodily pleaſures, and ſubduing and mortifying our carnal luſts, we fit and diſpoſe our ſelves for another ſtate: and when our ſouls are thus ſpiritualized, they will ſoon grow weary of this fleſh, and long for their departure; they will be

be always ready to take wing, and fly away into the other world, where at laſt they will meet with a body ſuited to their rational and ſpiritual appetites.

2. From hence we may give ſome account of the different degrees of glory in the other ſtate. For though all good men ſhall have glorious bodies, yet the glory of them all ſhall not be equal; they ſhall all ſhine as ſtars, and *yet one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory; there is one glory of the ſun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the ſtars; ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead.* Some will have bodies more bright and reſplendent than others: Thoſe who have done ſome extraordinary ſervice to their Lord, who have ſuffered bravely and courageouſly for his name; or thoſe who by the conſtant exerciſe of ſeverity and mortification have arrived to an higher pitch, and attained to a greater meaſure of purity and holineſs than others, ſhall ſhine as ſtars of the firſt magnitude: *Dan.* 12. 3. *And they that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever.* It is certain that the pu-

reſt and moſt ſpiritual bodies ſhall be given to thoſe who are moſt fitted for them, to the moſt heavenly and ſpiritual ſouls: ſo that this is no little encouragement to us to make the greateſt proficiency we can poſſibly in the ways of vertue and piety, ſince the more we wean our ſelves from theſe preſent things and ſenſible objects, the more glorious and heavenly will our bodies be at the reſurrection.

3. Let this conſideration engage us patiently to bear thoſe afflictions, ſickneſſes and bodily pains which we are exerciſed with in this life. *The time of our redemption draweth nigh*; let us but hold out awhile longer, and all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and we ſhall never ſigh nor ſorrow any more. And how ſoon ſhall we forget all the miſery and uneaſineſs we endured in this earthly tabernacle, when once we are cloathed with that houſe which is from above? we are now but in our journey towards the heavenly *Canaan*, are pilgrims and ſtrangers here, and therefore muſt expect to ſtruggle with many ſtraits and difficulties, but it will not be long before we ſhall come to

our

our journeys end, and that will make amends for all: we ſhall then be in a quiet and ſafe harbour out of the reach of thoſe ſtorms and dangers wherewith we are here encompaſſed: we ſhall then be at home, at our Father's houſe, no more expoſed to thoſe inconveniences which, ſo long as we abide in this tabernacle of clay, we are ſubject unto. And let us not forfeit all this happineſs onely for want of a little more patience and conſtancy; but let us hold out to the end, and we ſhall at laſt receive abundant recompence for all the trouble and uneaſineſs of our paſſage, and be enſtated in perfect endleſs reſt and peace.

4. Let this eſpecially arm and fortify us againſt the fear of death; for death is now conquered and diſarmed, and can doe us no hurt. It ſeparates us indeed from this body for a while, but it is onely that we may receive it again far more pure and glorious. It takes away our old rags, and beſtows upon us royal robes: either therefore let us lay aſide the profeſſion of this hope of the reſurrection unto life, or elſe let us with more courage expect our own diſſolution, and

with greater patience bear that of our friends and relations. *Wo is us who are forced ſtill to ſojourn in Meſech, and to dwell in the tents of Kedar:* for how can it be well with us ſo long as we are chained to theſe earthly carcaſſes? As God therefore ſaid once to *Jacob, fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and I will ſurely bring thee up again*; ſo may I ſay to you, fear not to go down into the houſe of rottenneſs, fear not to lay down your heads in the duſt, for God will certainly bring you out again, and that after a much more glorious manner. Let death pull down this houſe of clay, ſince God hath undertaken to rear it up again infinitely more ſplendid and uſefull.

5. And Laſtly, Let us all take care to live ſo here, that we may be *accounted worthy to obtain the other world, and the reſurrection from the dead.* Let us *riſe*, in a moral ſenſe, *from the death of ſin to the life of righteouſneſs*, and then the ſecond death ſhall have no power over us. A renewed and purified mind and ſoul ſhall never fail of an heavenly and glorious body in the other world, but a ſenſual

ſual and worldly mind, as it hath no affection for, ſo can it find no place in thoſe pure regions of light and happineſs. Since therefore we have this comfortable hope of a glorious reſurrection unto life eternal, let us *purify our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*; let us hold faſt our profeſſion, and ſtedfaſtly adhere to our duty, whatever we may loſe or ſuffer by it here, as knowing *we ſhall reap, if we faint not.* And this is Saint *Paul*'s exhortation with which he concludes his diſcourſe of the reſurrection, *Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

# A SERMON

Preached before the

## Houſe of COMMONS.

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### The Twelfth Sermon.

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JOB XXVII. 5, 6.

*God forbid that I ſhould juſtify you: till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

*My righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.*

THESE words may be conſidered as the reſolution of a truly honeſt man, whoſe vertue and goodneſs depends not upon any outward accidents or fortuitous circumſtances; who in all

things keeps an exact conſcience, and in all times, places and conditions acts by the ſame unalterable rule of righteouſneſs, and ſteadily purſues what is good and honeſt, whatever he may loſe or ſuffer by it. Would you know, ſaith *Seneca*, whom I call a good and perfect man, I mean ſuch an one, *quem malum facere nulla vis nulla neceſſitas poteſt.* Whom no outward force, no exigence or turn of affairs, neither proſpect of advantage, nor fear of inconvenience can ever prevail with to doe an evil or baſe action; who can never be ſwayed by any particular ſiniſter intereſt to doe that which his own mind inwardly diſapproves and condemns.

A truly honeſt man conſiders not what will take beſt, or pleaſe moſt, whether it will prove for his credit or profit, whether he ſhall gain or loſe friends by it, whether it will hinder or further his advancement in the world; but in all caſes inviolably keeps to what is fit, juſt and reaſonable, and behaves himſelf as becomes a good honeſt man, being wholly unconcerned for the ſucceſs and event of what his conſcience tells him he ought to doe:

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he is reſolved to pleaſe God, and to doe his duty, and to maintain the peace of his own mind, let the world go as it will.

But on the other ſide, the crafty wiſe politicians of this world live by no certain law; profeſs, believe, practiſe this Religion, or that, or none at all, as may beſt ſuit with the preſent ſtate of things and juncture of affairs, or with thoſe particular private deſigns which they carry on in the world, and in all their actions are governed by the giddy and uncertain meaſures of intereſt and worldly policy; and though ſometimes, if it happens to be for their intereſt ſo to doe, they may ſeem to ſpeak and act as fairly as any men whatever; yet to ſerve a turn, to promote their temporal ſafety and advantage, or ſome other bye and ſelfiſh deſign, they ſhall not refuſe to commit the baſeſt and fouleſt crimes.

Now that which I would perſuade you to from theſe words is this, that in all your actions you would govern your ſelves by the fixt and immutable principles of conſcience and honeſty, and always ſtedfaſtly adhere to your plain duty,

ty, though never ſo highly tempted to ſwerve from it. —*Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteouſneſs I hold faſt and will not let it go, my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.* I ſhall handle theſe words,

I. More particularly as they relate to *Job*, by whom they were ſpoken.

II. More generally, as they may be applied to men in all ſtates and conditions.

I. As to the particular inſtance of *Job*, we all know he is propounded to us in holy Scripture as the moſt eminent example of an invincible reſolution and unſhaken conſtancy in maintaining his innocence and integrity in two very different fortunes, the one highly proſperous and flouriſhing, the other no leſs ſtrangely adverſe and calamitous; both which one after another by God's wiſe providence did befall him, for the more illuſtrious trial and manifeſtation of his ſincere and diſintereſted loyalty to God and Religion; and it is no eaſie matter to determine in which of theſe two ſtates he met

met with the greater temptations, whether he found it the more difficult task to keep a good conſcience in that ſplendid and plentifull condition he was once in, or to hold faſt his righteouſneſs in that deplorable poverty and want of all things, which he was at laſt reduced unto. For without doubt riches and honours and high places, and an uninterrupted proſperity are as great ſnares, and as dangerous temptations, and often prove as fatal, nay, I may ſay, are generally more apt to draw men aſide from the love of goodneſs and the care of their ſouls, than the ſevereſt afflictions, or the moſt ſurprizing calamities and outward croſſes. So that *Job* perhaps was as much to be admired, and as hard to be imitated in his vertue and piety, when he was the greateſt man in the *Eaſt*, as in his ſubmiſſion, meekneſs and patience, when he became the miſerableſt ſpectacle that eyes ever beheld.

1. *Job* in his moſt proſperous ſtate *held faſt his righteouſneſs, and would not let it go.* Though he enjoyed all the pleaſures, riches and worldly ſatisfactions that the moſt ambitious or covetous mind could crave,

crave, yet he was ſo ſtrictly religious and temperate, that when he was deprived and ſtripp'd of all, and left as bare and as naked as he was when he firſt came into the world, his mind could not reproach nor condemn him for any unworthy or unhandſome carriage, for any one notorious failure in his duty that ſhould provoke God to deal ſo harſhly with him. His three Friends indeed unadviſedly fell into that fault which is ſo common amongſt us even to this day, of judging and cenſuring men by their outward conditions, and by what befalls them in this life; they could not imagine that ſuch unheard-of calamities could betide an innocent perſon; when therefore they ſaw ſo great a Lord and Prince in ſo forlorn a plight, him whom but a little before all men called bleſſed, and accounted the darling and favourite of Heaven, ſitting among the aſhes, and ſcraping his painfull boils with a piece of a broken pot, they preſently began to ſuſpect his piety and integrity, and to call upon him to confeſs thoſe grievous ſins which had plucked down ſuch terrible vengeance upon his head, fondly preſuming that he muſt needs be a greater ſinner than

than others, becauſe he was more miſerable and unfortunate. Which uncharitable cenſure forced from this excellent perſon thoſe rhetorical and pathetical vindications of himſelf and all his actions in the days of his proſperity, which you may find ſcattered up and down in this Book, eſpecially in the 31*ſt* Chapter.

Though his Friends were ſo unkind as to reproach and condemn him as guilty of ſome notorious crimes, whereby he had juſtly deſerved all thoſe evils which God had been pleaſed to lay upon him; yet his own conſcience, a more impartial judge, acquitted him, and ſpoke peace to him. He was not afraid or aſhamed to have all his life paſt impartially and thoroughly examined, and whatever he had done expoſed to publick view, and to the knowledge of all the world. Nay he durſt appeal to God himſelf, the ſearcher of hearts, and call the righteous and impartial judge of the earth to bear witneſs to his uprightneſs and ſincerity. He challenged even his very enemies, thoſe who had the leaſt kindneſs for him, to draw up a bill againſt him, and to try if they could find any thing whereof to accuſe

accuſe him. He was ſo juſt, ſo humble, ſo moderate, ſo charitable, when he was in power and proſperity, that none either envied his greatneſs, or rejoyced at his fall. With ſuch prudence and ſobriety, with ſuch integrity and temper did he manage a great and magnificent fortune, that in the loweſt ebb of it, when he was reduced to the meaneſt condition a man can poſſibly ſink into (and ſuch a change is moſt apt to open the mouths, not onely of our own conſciences, but of all that know us, againſt us;) I ſay, in this his worſt eſtate, neither his own mind, nor his friends, nor his enemies (if ſo good a man had any) could find matter of complaint or reproach againſt him. And this was ſuch a remarkable inſtance of pure and reſolute vertue, that God Almighty ſeemed to rejoice and triumph that he had now found a man who could preſerve himſelf innocent and upright even amidſt all the flattering temptations that attend riches and power and worldly greatneſs. *Haſt thou conſidered* (ſaid the Lord unto Satan, *chap.* 1. *verſe* 8. as it were in a boaſting manner) *my ſervant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man,*

*man, one that feareth God, and eſcheweth evil?* but

2. Behold the ſcene of a ſudden quite changed, and extreme poverty, loſs and pain dwelling there, where plenty and honour and riches formerly made their abode. The great enemy of mankind was at length ſatisfied that this renowned ſervant of God was not to be enticed by any of his baits; that he had a ſoul too great to fall in love with the fading beauties and periſhing glories of this world; and therefore when he ſaw he would not be moved from his duty by fair means, he uſes force and violence, and ſets himſelf openly to aſſault that vertue, which would not be caught in any of his ſnares, nor yield to any of his gilded temptations. And to this end in one day he ſpirits away all his wealth and ſervants, ſlays all his children by the fall of an houſe, and exerciſes ſuch cruelty upon his body, that there was nothing about him whole and entire and free from ſores, but onely *the skin of his teeth*; he arms his own wife and his beſt friends againſt him; his *brethren went far from him*; *his acquaintance were eſtran-*

*eſtranged from him*, his *kinſmen failed him*, *and his familiars forgot him: the young children deſpiſed him*, *thoſe that dwelt in his houſe counted him for a ſtranger*, *and thoſe whom he loved moſt were turned againſt him.* But when he was thus abandoned and forſaken of all, he yet held faſt his righteouſneſs, and would not remove his integrity from him; he ſtill preſerved a good conſcience, which neither the *Sabæans*, nor the *Chaldæans*, nor the Devil himſelf could rob him of. Notwithſtanding all theſe violent attaques of Satan, he bravely ſtood his ground, and the greatneſs of his ſufferings ſerved onely to make his courage and conſtancy ſtill more glorious and illuſtrious. Under all theſe afflictions he entertained not an unworthy thought, never uttered one hard word concerning God, but humbly kiſſed the hand that ſtruck him, and received evil things from him with the ſame gratefull reſentment he uſed to receive good things; and was as thankfull for theſe ſad misfortunes and dire calamities, as other men are for the greateſt favours and bleſſings. And whatever betided him in this world, yet he would never fall out with God,

or

or doe any thing that might diſpleaſe him, or wound his own mind and conſcience. Thus this heavenly Champion came off with ſucceſs and victory, and *the trial of his faith and patience* was found *unto praiſe and honour and glory.*

Now the words thus underſtood, relating in particular to *Job*, as exerciſed with theſe various conflicts and temptations, afford us theſe two plain, but uſefull, rules.

1. That we ſhould ſo manage our ſelves in times of proſperity, and ſo uſe and improve our worldly advantages of health, riches, honour, authority, and the like, that whenever we come to be deprived of them, our *hearts* may have nothing to *reproach* us for.

2. That we ſhould never, either to prevent, or to redeem our ſelves from any outward evil and calamity, doe any thing which our own minds and conſciences do diſapprove and condemn.

1. We ſhould ſo manage our ſelves in times of proſperity, and ſo uſe and im-

prove all worldly advantages of health, riches, honour, authority, and the like, that whenever we come to be deprived of them, our *hearts* may have nothing to *reproach* us for.

It is certain, that ſo long as the world goes on our ſide, and we live in eaſe and plenty, and enjoy whatever our hearts can wiſh for, we have not ſo quick and lively a ſenſe of good and evil, nor do we ordinarily ſuffer our conſciences to ſpeak ſo freely and plainly to us, as when we are under ſome affliction or diſtreſs. Whilſt we enjoy an uninterrupted proſperity, the noiſe and tumult of the world, the hurry and multiplicity of buſineſs and ſecular affairs, the variety of ſenſual pleaſures and delights, the mirth and jollity of company, and the ſeveral temporal projects and deſigns we have in hand do generally ſo wholly engroſs and prepoſſeſs our thoughts, as that they drown the ſofter whiſpers of our minds and reaſons, and allow no time or opportunity to our conſciences to doe their office. But when once we meet with a ſudden check and ſtop, and are brought into ſtraits and difficulties, when we are croſſed

croſſed and diſappointed, and all our fine hopes and expectations are blaſted and defeated, eſpecially when death and judgment draws nigh; then doth conſcience take the advantage againſt us, and fly in our faces, and ſet our ſins in order before us, and fill our minds with galling regrets, and miſgiving fears, and diſquieting and uncomfortable reflexions upon our paſt follies, and we ſoon begin to have quite other notions and apprehenſions of things than we had formerly in the days of ſunſhine and ſecurity. Thus *Joſeph*'s brethren, after they had ſold him into *Egypt*, and thereby had afflicted their Father's ſoul even unto death, for a long time ſeemed pleaſed and ſatisfied with themſelves that they had done no worſe to their innocent brother, that they had not ſlain him; but afterwards when they found themſelves captives in a ſtrange Land, they laid their hands upon their breaſts and thought more impartially on what they had done, *and ſaid one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul when he beſought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us.*

When we come to languiſh upon a bed of ſickneſs, our minds will then take the liberty to reproach us for thoſe many days of health and ſtrength, which now without any ſenſe or remorſe we fondly trifle and ſquander away. Should our riches take to themſelves wings and flie away (and we all know how ſlippery and uncertain all theſe earthly enjoyments are) it would then wound us ſore to think how much we ſtretched our conſciences to get ſome part of them, and how prodigally we miſ-ſpent other part of them, how much we loved them and truſted in them, and what an ill uſe we made of them. If ever we our ſelves ſhould come to ſtand in need of the help, aſſiſtence and charity of others, how irkſome and uneaſie will it be to us, to remember how little our bowels were moved at the misfortunes of our poor neighbours, and what little compaſſion we ſhewed to the miſerable and neceſſitous, and how loth we were in our flouriſhing condition to doe any one a good turn, if it put us but to the leaſt expence or trouble?

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However great and proſperous your preſent condition may be, yet often conſider it may ſhortly be otherwiſe with you, daily interpoſe the thoughts of a change: ſhould I loſe this honour, eſteem, authority and dignity I am now poſſeſſed of, how many untoward ſcars and blemiſhes will ſtick upon me? ſhould I be reduced to a mean, low eſtate, ſhall I not then bluſh to be put in mind of that pride, vain-glory, haughtineſs, oppreſſion and domineering I was guilty of, when I was in place and power? and will not the forced remembrance of ſuch our baſe and unworthy behaviour be more grievous and afflictive to us, than any outward loſs or pain? our conſciences which now we ſtifle and ſmother, will at ſuch a time be even with us, *and our own wickedneſs ſhall reprove us, and our iniquity ſhall correct us*, as the Prophet expreſſeth it.

Learn therefore ſo to demean your ſelves in proſperity, as that your hearts may acquit you, and have nothing to chide and rebuke you for, when you come into adverſity; and ſo to husband and improve thoſe preſent advantages and

opportunities you have in your hands, that when they are withdrawn from you you may be able with great comfort and ſatisfaction to reflect upon the good you have done with them, the ſenſe of which will mightily blunt the edge, and mitigate the ſharpneſs of thoſe evils that do at any time befall you; this was *Job*'s great comfort and ſupport under all his diſmal ſufferings, when he was fallen from the higheſt pinacle of wealth and honour almoſt as low as hell, that he had held faſt his integrity, and that his mind could not reproach him.

2. We ſhould never, either to prevent or to redeem our ſelves from any outward evil or calamity, doe any thing which our own minds and conſciences do diſapprove and condemn. Though *Job* had loſt all other things that men uſually call good, yet *his righteouſneſs he held faſt, and would not let it go:* and indeed the peace of our own minds is more to be valued than any temporal bleſſing whatever, and there is no pain or loſs ſo intolerable as that inward fear, regret and ſhame which ſin and guilt create: ſo that whatever external advantage we acquire

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in the world by wounding our conſciences, we are certainly great loſers by it; no real good can ever be obtained by doing ill, a guilty conſcience being the ſoreſt evil that a man can poſſibly be afflicted with.

Herein eſpecially do inward troubles exceed all outward afflictions whatever that can happen to our bodies or eſtates; namely, that under all temporal calamities, how deſperate and remedileſs ſoever they be, yet we have ſomething to buoy up and ſupport our ſpirits, to keep us in heart, and ennable us to bear them, the joys of a good conſcience, the ſenſe or hopes of God's love and favour, the inward ſatisfaction of our own minds and thoughts, theſe things will wonderfully carry us through all thoſe difficulties and adverſities which we ſhall meet with in the world, and are able to uphold and chear our hearts under the greateſt preſſures and hardſhips; but when a man's mind it ſelf is diſturbed and diſquieted, where ſhall he ſeek for, where can he find any eaſe or remedy?

This ſeems to be the meaning of the Wiſe-man, in the 18*th* of the *Proverbs*,

the 14th Verſe, *the ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmity, but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* It is a ſaying much like that of our Saviours, *if the ſalt hath loſt its ſavour wherewith ſhall it be ſalted?* if that by which we ſeaſon all other things it ſelf want it, by what ſhall it be ſeaſoned? ſo here *the ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmity, i. e.* a mind and ſpirit that is at peace within it ſelf, that is conſcious of its own innocence and integrity will enable a man to bear with great patience and contentment thoſe chaſtiſements which God may ſee good to exerciſe him with in this life; *but a wounded ſpirit who can bear? i. e.* if that ſpirit or mind which ſhould help us to bear all thoſe evils that betide us, be it ſelf wounded and diſquieted, what is there then left in a man to ſuſtain it? when our onely remedy is become our diſeaſe, when that which alone can ſupport us in all our troubles and diſtreſſes is become it ſelf our greateſt torment, how ſhall we be able to bear it?

What dangers ſoever therefore we are expoſed unto, let us be ſure to preſerve a good conſcience, nay let us rather ſuf-

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fer the greateſt evils, than doe the leaſt. If we always continue faithfull and conſtant to the dictates of reaſon and religion, our minds will be in peace, and the conſcience of our having pleaſed God and done our duty, and ſecured our greateſt intereſt will hugely eaſe and alleviate our afflictions, and ſuſtain us under the moſt preſſing evils we can ſuffer in this life, whereas on the other ſide, the greateſt confluence of the good things of this world will not be able to free us from the diſturbance and anxiety of an evil conſcience, or to quiet and ſettle our minds when haraſſed and tortured with the ſenſe of guilt: And this ſhall lead me to the ſecond thing I propounded, which was,

II. To conſider theſe words more generally, as they may be applied to men in all ſtates and conditions, and then they propound to us this rule, which we ſhould always live by; namely, that we ſhould upon no conſideration whatever doe any thing that our minds or conſciences reprove us for. And this is the juſt character of an honeſt man, and of one fit to be truſted, that he will never either out of fear or favour conſent to doe any thing

thing that his mind tells him is unfit, unworthy, or unbecoming, or that he cannot anſwer or juſtify to himſelf; but in all caſes will doe what is right and honeſt, however it may be thought of and reliſhed by other men; and reſolutely adhere to his plain duty, though perhaps it may hinder his preferment and advancement, his trade and gain, and expoſe him to many inconveniences in this world. I wiſh you would all with *Job* in my Text take up this brave reſolution, *My righteouſneſs I will hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.* For your encouragement I ſhall onely crave leave to repreſent unto you theſe two things.

1. That this is the plaineſt, eaſieſt, and moſt certain rule that we can propound to our ſelves.

2. That it is the wiſeſt and ſafeſt rule, the beſt policy, all things conſidered.

1. That this is the plaineſt, eaſieſt, and moſt certain rule that we can propound to our ſelves. Let times be never ſo difficult or dangerous, and affairs never

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ver ſo intricate and involved, yet an honeſt man is hardly ever at a loſs what to doe; *The integrity of the upright ſhall guide him, and the righteouſneſs of the perfect ſhall direct his way.*

The path of juſtice and honeſty is ſtreight, right on, neither to the right hand, nor to the left; there are no labyrinths or winding Meanders in it, ſo that there is no great wit or cunning required to find it out. To any one whoſe mind is free from prejudice and evil affections, who is not governed by blind paſſion or intereſt, or any bye corrupt deſigns, the way he ſhould walk in is plain and obvious, like the high-way. So it is called by the Prophet *Iſaiah*: *An high-way ſhall be there, and it ſhall be called the way of holineſs, and wayfaring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein.*

As for thoſe indeed that will not keep the direct road, but thinking to paſs ſome nearer way, travel in untrodden paths, through deſart woods or ſolitary fields, over hedge and ditch, as we ſay, it is no wonder if they are ſometimes out of their way, and go backward and forward,

ward, and are often at a ſtand, not knowing how to guide their ſteps, and what path to chuſe, till at laſt they are utterly loſt and bewildred; and ſuch are all the wiſe men of this world, who make haſte to be rich, and are reſolved by right or wrong to be great and powerfull, and mind nothing but their own intereſt and worldly advantage; who forſake the plain and beaten path of vertue and piety, and betake themſelves to the crooked ways of unrighteouſneſs; they are infinitely various and uncertain, ſometimes they go ſtreight forward, and then quite back again; ſometimes they are of one party, ſometimes of another; to day of this Religion, to morrow of that, reeling to and fro like a drunken man; ſo that whatever they profeſs themſelves to be this week, yet neither themſelves, nor any one elſe can gueſs what mind they will be of the next, ſeeing their opinions and judgments and practices depend upon ſuch cauſes as are as variable as the wind or weather: they are always ready to turn as the tide and ſtream does, and are reſolved to pleaſe thoſe that are uppermoſt, like the *Roman* that told *Auguſtus Cæſar*, in his Civil-wars,

wars, when asked by him what ſide he would take, that he would be *præda victoris*, of that party which prevailed.

But alas! what an abſurd and unequal life do ſuch men lead? How do their minds, their words, their actions claſh and interfere one with the other? How often are they forced to contradict themſelves, and to call themſelves fools or knaves for doing thoſe things, which afterwards, when another intereſt is to be ſerved, they are fain to diſown, nay to doe the quite contrary? Into what mazes and perplexities doth this wandring, fickle and deſultory temper betray men? what pitifull ſhifts are they put to to patch up ſuch diſagreeing practices, and to reconcile ſuch different deſigns? ſince they are forced ſervilely to comply with ſo many ſeveral humours, to act ſo many different parts, and ſo often to follow other counſels, and take new meaſures; with what great artifice and ſubtilty muſt they continually manage themſelves, with what warineſs muſt they direct their feet, leſt by any miſadventure they ſhould expoſe their own mean and ſordid deſigns?

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Now ſuch perſons as are thus fickle and inconſtant to themſelves, and are guided by no fixt and ſteady principles, but onely by their own preſent intereſt, which depends upon the uncertain ſtate of worldly affairs, and a thouſand other little contingencies, muſt needs be often at a loſs which way to ſteer themſelves, and can never be certain they are in the right. They are always to ſeek, and are utterly unreſolved what to ſay or doe, till they can ſmell out how matters are likely to go, and ſee the final event and iſſue of things: ſuch men are like the *Samaritanes*, who, as *Joſephus* tells us, when the *Jews* were in any affliction or danger, diſclaimed all acquaintance with them, and relation to them, and knew them not; but at another time, when the *Jews* proſpered, and were great and potent, then they boaſted of their alliance, and would needs be near a-kin to them, of the race of *Ephraim* and *Manaſſes* the Sons of *Joſeph*.

But on the other ſide, he that aims at nothing more than to pleaſe God and his own conſcience, and to doe the duty of the

the place he is in fairly and juſtly, in all times knows what to doe, and is ſtill the ſame man, *and meddles not with thoſe that are given to change*; his own honeſty is his tutour and directour, his counſellour and guide. He knows that the nature of goodneſs and vertue is always the ſame, and cannot be altered by any change of the times or ſtate of affairs, and therefore under all external changes and occurrences whatever, he keeps the ſame ſmooth and even courſe of righteouſneſs, peaceableneſs, ſobriety, loyalty and charity; whether the world ſmiles or frowns upon him, he ſtill holds to his principles, does the ſame things, and goes on in the ſame road; and nothing, neither *honour* nor *diſhonour*, neither *good report* nor *evil report* can divert him from it.

2. This is not onely the plaineſt, but the wiſeſt and ſafeſt rule, the beſt policy, all things conſidered. For if we reſolutely maintain our innocence and integrity,

1. We ſhall ordinarily eſcape beſt in this life; but however

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2. We ſhall be ſure to come off well at laſt, and to be plentifully rewarded for our faithfulneſs and uprightneſs in the other world.

1. We ſhall ordinarily eſcape beſt in this life. There is nothing that doth more contribute to our ſafety and ſecurity even in the worſt and moſt dangerous times, than a firm and conſtant adherence to our duty. For,

(1.) By this we engage God Almighty to be our friend, and do moſt effectually recommend our ſelves to his care and good providence; ſo long as we commit our ways unto God in well-doing, and no hazards or dangers on the one ſide, nor any worldly advantages or conveniences on the other can prevail with us in any one inſtance to diſobey him, we may be aſſured that he will never forſake us, but that he will either deliver us from thoſe evils we fear, or elſe ſupport us under them, and by the aſſiſtences of his bleſſed ſpirit enable us to bear them with patience and chearfulneſs. A good man in all his dangers and diſtreſſes hath a ſure friend,

friend, who will always ſtand by him; an Almighty Saviour and Deliverer, on whom he may ſecurely rely for ſalvation and protection; he is not *afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord:* He hath nothing to agaſt him, or fill him with pale fears, and dreadfull terrours and jealouſies; he hath no ſecret guilt that haunts him and ſtares him in the face, and ſeverely threatens him; and therefore amidſt all worldly diſtractions and confuſions, he is not diſmayed; his innocence doth inſpirit him with boldneſs and courage, he is not afraid to truſt God with his life and honour, and eſtate, or any thing elſe that is dear to him; and can with an humble confidence and aſſurance, as it were, challenge the favour of Heaven, ſaying with good *Hezekiah, Remember now, O Lord, I beſeech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight: though the earth ſhould be removed, and the mountains carried into the midſt of the Sea; though the waters thereof ſhould roar and be troubled, and the mountains ſhake* and tremble *with the ſwelling thereof*; nay, though the world ſhould

crack and break in pieces about his ears, yet *intrepidum ferient ruinæ*, he would ſtill be unmoved and unſhaken. Knowing that his father, his friend, his patron and benefactour, whom he hath always ſerved in the honeſty and ſimplicity of his heart, is Pilot of the Ship, in all the ſtorms and tempeſts of this lower world he can put his truſt in God, and with an unſhaken confidence commit himſelf, and all he hath, to him, who is engaged to protect and defend the innocent, who encourage and ſupport themſelves in him alone. The Lord is his *ſtrength*, his *fortreſs*, his *refuge in the day of affliction*, and under the *ſhadow of his wings*, as in an impregnable caſtle, he can ſecurely hide and ſhelter himſelf, *till theſe calamities be overpaſt.*

But now on the other ſide the worldly projectour, who will not truſt himſelf or his concerns with Almighty wiſedom and power, but endeavours to ſecure himſelf, and to raiſe his fortunes, and make himſelf great and conſiderable in the world by ways of his own deviſing, ſuch as God doth not allow, nay doth ſtrictly forbid; who, as it were, renounces God Al-

Almighty's care and protection, and places all his hope and confidence in his own craft and ſagacity, hath nothing to ſupport and bear up his ſpirit under any misfortunes. In a time of publick danger and calamity he is the moſt diſconſolate forſaken wretch in the world: his guilt arms every thing againſt him, and makes him afraid even of his own ſhadow, (like that wicked Emperour *Caligula*, who every time it thundred ran under his bed, as if he had been aimed at in every crack;) at ſuch a time he is at his wits end, and knows not where to turn himſelf, and his *hope is as a ſpider's web*, nay *as the giving up of the ghoſt*.

(2.) An honeſt and upright man is moſt likely to find the beſt treatment from other men, even from the moſt wicked and ungodly. *Who is he that will harm you*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. 3. 13. a good man is armed with innocence and harmleſneſs, which will guard and defend him from the injuries of wicked and lawleſs men: his unaffected piety, and unbyaſſed honeſty, and undiſſembled charity, the excellency of his tem-

per and diſpoſition, and the unblameableneſs of his life and converſation will ſpeak in his behalf, and plead his cauſe, and procure him ſo much love and eſteem in the world, that there will be but few that can find the heart to doe him any miſchief; as the harmleſs innocence and ſimplicity of little children do ſecure and protect them from all harm and violence, and engage every one almoſt in their defence. Whence this obſervation hath been made, and is juſtified by experience, that one who is unſtable and wavering is loved by no man, becauſe he is not fit to be truſted; but a man who is conſtant to worthy and generous principles commands the like conſtancy of eſteem and veneration from all men, and is commonly ſafe and ſecure in all times, his very enemies reverencing ſuch invincible vertue and honeſty. He that deſires and deſigns nothing but what is fair and reaſonable, may promiſe himſelf the good-will of all round about him: whereas he that is deeply engaged in worldly intrigues, and is reſolved, *per fas & nefas*, to enrich himſelf, and is always climing higher, trampling upon all that ſtand in his way, muſt neceſſarily be

be engaged in many quarrels, and make many enemies, and draw on himſelf the envy and ill-will of the proud and ambitious, and live in perpetual emulation and contention; for as he ſtriveth to exceed and overtop others, ſo others endeavour as much to get before him; and though for a-while he getteth the better, yet his enemies are at work to undermine him, and blow him up, and he muſt expect that in a little time ſome ſudden change of affairs, ſome unlucky hit or other will tumble him down, and put an end to all his fine deſigns and projects.

(3.) Whatever misfortunes and diſappointments an honeſt upright man may meet with in the world, yet he incurs no real diſgrace, *he ſhall not be aſhamed in an evil day:* no man can reproach him, or juſtly inſult over his fall. Whereas when the deſigns of ambitious and covetous oppreſſours are fruſtrated and defeated, when the crafty Politicians of this world are enſnared in their own devices, *the city rejoiceth*, it is matter of ſport and triumph to their neighbours, and every one acknowledges the juſtice of it. But I haſten.

(4.) An upright man, how miſerable and forlorn ſoever his outward condition be, yet is pleaſed and ſatisfied with himſelf; his mind is at quiet, and though the weather abroad be never ſo bluſtering and tempeſtuous, yet there is a calm within, and he is then moſt ſenſible of the joy and contentment which flows from innocence and a rightly ordered converſation, when there is the moſt trouble and confuſion without him. When all the plagues of God are poured upon *Egypt*, a good man is a *Goſhen* to himſelf, hath light in darkneſs, and under the moſt cloudy appearance of the Heavens, finds nothing but clearneſs and ſerenity in his own breaſt; and a good conſcience can make a man rich and great and happy even in the midſt of the greateſt worldly miſeries and diſtractions.

Whereas when wicked men are in any danger or diſtreſs, they have a ſecret enemy in their own boſoms, and their guilty conſciences will fly in their faces, and fill them with amazing fears and terrours, and wrack and torture their ſouls with unexpreſſible grief and anguiſh. And oh!

oh! how ſad and diſconſolate muſt their condition needs be, when the arrows of the Almighty ſtick faſt in them, and the poiſon thereof drinks up their ſpirits, and the terrours of God ſet themſelves in array againſt them; when there is nothing but diſmaying dangers and diſtractions abroad, and all outward hopes fail them, and at the ſame time their own minds write bitter things againſt them? this will double every evil that befalls them, the ſenſe of guilt being the very ſting and venom of all outward troubles and diſtreſſes. But

2. He that exactly obſerves the rules and dictates of his own conſcience will be ſure to come off well at laſt, in the final account and judgment; then God will confirm and ratify the ſentence of his conſcience, and publickly own and approve of what he hath done, and clear and vindicate his innocency, and reward his fidelity and conſtancy before all the world.

At that day, when all our great undertakers and contrivers of miſchief, all the cunning practiſers of guile and hy-

pocriſie ſhall lie down in ſhame, when their ſecret arts and baſe tricks, whereby they impoſed on the world, ſhall be detected and *proclaimed*, as it were, *upon the houſe-top*, and all their unworthy projects and deſigns ſhall be laid open and naked, being ſtript of thoſe ſpecious pretences they here diſguiſed them with; when the hidden things of darkneſs ſhall be brought to light, and the counſels of all mens hearts ſhall be made manifeſt as the noon-day; at that day, I ſay, the upright and righteous man ſhall ſtand in great boldneſs, and ſhall lift up his head with joy and confidence; and then it will appear that he was the beſt politician, and the onely perſon that either underſtood or regarded his true intereſt.

To conclude all. Our conſciences are either our beſt friends, or our greateſt enemies; they are either a continual feaſt, or a very hell to us. A conſcience well reſolved and ſetled, is the greateſt comfort of our lives, the beſt antidote againſt all kind of temptations, the moſt pretious treaſure that we can lay up againſt an evil day, and our ſureſt and ſtrongeſt hold to ſecure us from all dangers, which

can

can never be taken unleſs through our own folly and negligence.

But an evil clamorous conſcience that is continually twitting and reproaching us, is a perpetual wrack and torment; it waſts our ſpirits, and preys upon our hearts, and eats out the ſweetneſs of all our worldly enjoyments, and fills us with horrid fears and ghaſtly apprehenſions; this is that knawing *worm that never dieth*, the neceſſary fruit of ſin and guilt, and the neceſſary cauſe of everlaſting anguiſh and vexation.

A SER-

# A SERMON

Preached at

## *WHITE-HALL.*

## The Thirteenth Sermon.

2 TIM. I. 10.

*---And hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

*LIFE and immortality* by a figure often used in the holy Scriptures is the same with immortal life, which our Saviour *hath brought to light*, that is, hath given us undoubted assurance of, by the revelation of the *Gospel*.

For

For though all men by the light of nature have ſome apprehenſions of a future ſtate, yet their reaſonings about it, when left to themſelves are miſerably vain and uncertain, and often very wild and extravagant. The beſt diſcourſes of the *Heathens* about the other life were weak and obſcure, and the wiſeſt *Philoſophers* ſpake but doubtfully and conjecturally about it; nor even in the books of *Moſes*, or writings of the *Prophets*, are there contained any plain expreſs promiſes of eternal life; all the knowledge men had of it before was but like the faint glimmerings of twilight, till the ſun of righteouſneſs appeared; till God was pleaſed to ſend one from that inviſible world, even his own moſt dear Son to dwell here and converſe amongſt men, to make a full diſcovery to us of this unknown countrey, and to conduct us in the onely true way to this everlaſting happineſs; an happineſs ſo great that we have not words big enough to expreſs it, nor faculties large enough to comprehend it: but yet ſo much of it is clearly revealed to us in the Goſpel as is moſt abundantly ſufficient to raiſe our thoughts and incite our

ſincereſt

ſincereſt endeavours for the obtaining of it.

By which plain revelation of this ſtate of immortality,

*Firſt*, Is moſt illuſtriouſly manifeſted to us the tranſcendent goodneſs and indulgence of our moſt mercifull Creatour, in that he will be pleaſed to reward ſuch imperfect ſervices, ſuch mean performances as the beſt of ours are with glory ſo immenſe, *as that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive* the greatneſs of it. There is nothing in us, nor any thing done by us that bears the leaſt proportion to ſuch an ample recompence. Our beſt actions ſtand in need of a pardon, ſo far are they from deſerving to be crowned. All poſſible duty and obedience we certainly owe to him, to whom we owe our beings, and ſhould God almighty have exacted it from us onely on the account of his ſovereign authority over us as we are his creatures we had been indiſpenſably obliged to all ſubjection to him; but that he ſhould over and above promiſe to reward our faithfulneſs

to

to him with eternal life, this is a moſt wonderfull inſtance of his infinite grace and goodneſs.

*Secondly*, By this revelation of immortal life is farther demonſtrated the exceeding great love of our ever bleſſed Saviour, who by his death and perfect obedience not onely purchaſed pardon for all our paſt rebellions and tranſgreſſions, not onely redeemed us from hell and deſtruction to which we had all rendred our ſelves moſt juſtly liable, (which alone had been an unſpeakable favour) but alſo merited an everlaſting kingdom of glory for us, if with true repentance we return to our duty. And this if any thing ſhews the infinite value and efficacy of our Saviour's appearing on our behalf, that by his moſt powerfull mediation he obtained not onely freedom from puniſhment, but alſo unexpreſſibly glorious rewards for us vile and wretched ſinners upon eaſie and moſt reaſonable conditions.

*Thirdly*, This eſpecially recommends our Chriſtianity to us, which contains ſuch glad tidings, which propounds ſuch mighty arguments to engage us to our duty,

duty, ſuch as no other religion ever did or could. For ſince hope and fear are the great hinges of all government, and the moſt prevailing paſſions of humane nature, what better thing can be propounded to our hope than to be as happy both in body and ſoul as we can be, and that for ever? what more dreadfull thing to our fear than everlaſting miſery? and this indeed is the utmoſt that can be ſaid or offered to men in order to the reclaiming them from their ſins, and recovering them to a conſcientious obſervance of God's laws, that God hath appointed a day wherein he will call all men to an account for the deeds they have done in this body, and reward the ſincere, faithfull Chriſtian with immortal glory, and puniſh the diſobedient and impenitent with everlaſting vengeance, and if men can harden themſelves againſt theſe moſt powerfull conſiderations, if they are not at all concerned or ſolicitous about their eternal happineſs or miſery, what other motives are likely to prevail with them, or able to make any impreſſion upon them? For is there any thing of greater weight and moment that can be propounded to the reaſons and underſtandings

dings of men than what ſhall become of them in a ſtate which they are very ſhortly to enter upon, and which ſhall never have an end?

I humbly therefore beg your patience whilſt with all the plainneſs and ſeriouſneſs I can, I apply my ſelf to theſe three ſorts of perſons.

I. To thoſe who would ſeem to doubt of this fundamental doctrine of a future life.

II. To thoſe who profeſs to believe it, but not fully and heartily.

III. To thoſe who do really and conſtantly believe it.

I. I begin with thoſe who would ſeem to doubt of this fundamental doctrine of a future life. And though far better things are to be hoped concerning all here preſent, who ſhew ſo much reſpect to religion, as to bear a part in God's ſolemn worſhip, yet ſince nothing is more complained of than the prevailing atheiſm of this age; and ſince, if we judge of mens

faith

faith by their lives, we cannot but ſuſpect many of thoſe who paſs among us for orthodox believers to be really no other than mere infidels in theſe matters: I ſhall not wholly paſs theſe ſort of perſons by: not that I deſign at large to ſhew you the unreaſonableneſs of atheiſm, or to ſet before you the undeniable evidences we have of another world; but I ſhall put the whole cauſe upon this ſhort iſſue.

Let us for once be ſo kind to the *ſceptical* diſputers againſt religion as to ſuppoſe what they are never able to prove, that it is a very doubtfull thing whether there will be another life after this; that it is poſſible that all theſe ſtories of a judgment to come, heaven and hell, are mere fables, the inventions of crafty *politicians* and deſigning *Prieſts*; and that all good and vertuous men have been miſerably deceived and fed with fond hopes and fancies, and have unneceſſarily troubled themſelves about the matters of religion: (and ſurely you will all acknowledge this to be a very large conceſſion) yet granting all this, nothing is more plain than that if we would act prudently, and conſult our own ſafety

we ought to believe and live as if all theſe doctrines of religion were moſt certainly true; for every wiſe man will run as little hazard as he can, eſpecially in ſuch things as are of higheſt concernment to him, and wherein a miſtake would be fatal and undoing. Here therefore be pleaſed to conſider,

(I.) What little hazard he runs, or what little loſs he ordinarily undergoes who believes and acts according to theſe principles, ſhould they all at laſt prove falſe.

(II.) What extreme and deſperate hazard he runs, who doth not believe, nor live according to them, ſhould they all at laſt prove true.

(1.) What little hazard he runs, or what little loſs he ordinarily undergoes who believes and acts according to theſe principles ſhould they all at laſt prove falſe. All that this man loſes or ventures is onely ſome preſent gratifications, and enjoyments which he denies himſelf; he croſſes indeed the irregular inclinations of his nature, and forbears thoſe exceſſes that

that are truly hurtfull to him, and lives according to the dignity of his ſpecies, and is poſſeſſed with cares and fears about another world, (and theſe even the atheiſt himſelf cannot wholly free his mind from) and ties up himſelf to ſeveral rules and ſtrict duties, which contribute not a little to his convenient living here, and perhaps is expoſed to ſome hardſhips, reproaches and ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake; and this is the worſt of his caſe: but on the other ſide, he is bleſſed at preſent with a contented life, with peace of conſcience, and the joyfull expectation of an eternal reward hereafter; ſo that if he be in the right, he is then made for ever; if not, if he be miſtaken, his condition however will be no worſe than other mortals; he will have loſt indeed all the pains and trouble he was at about religion, but if his ſoul ſurvive not his body, he will never be ſenſible of it; this diſappointment will never vex nor grieve him in that land where all things are forgotten. So that a vertuous and righteous man may ordinarily paſs his days here more eaſily and comfortably than any wicked perſon, and pleaſe himſelf all his life long with the hopes or

dreams of future glories; which fancy alone (were it no other) will make him abundant recompence for all the ſelf-denial it puts him upon. But if theſe things at laſt prove true, he is then bleſſed above all expreſſion; if they prove falſe and vain hopes, and there be no other life after this, yet will it be as well with *him* as with the *Atheiſt* in that ſuppoſed ſtate of eternal ſilence and inſenſibility. He runs no hazard, he loſes nothing except ſome forbidden pleaſures, which in moſt caſes it is beſt for him, even as to this life, to be without. He is ſafe if theſe doctrines be not true, and unſpeakably happy for ever if they be true.

(2.) Conſider the extreme and deſperate hazard that man runs who doth not believe nor act according to theſe principles, ſhould they at laſt prove true; for he ſtakes and pawns all that can be called good and deſirable; he ventures being for ever undone and miſerable, if he ſhould chance to be miſtaken in his opinion, and it ſhould at laſt prove that there is another life after this. And therefore nothing would ſooner convince ſuch men of their deadly folly, than if they

they would but ſometimes ask themſelves when they are calm and ſober a few ſuch queſtions as theſe: What though I have almoſt perſuaded my ſelf that religion is nothing but a melancholy dream, or a politick cheat, or a common errour; yet what if at laſt it ſhould be true? How diſmal, and of what affrighting conſequence is a miſtake in ſuch a matter as this? what amazing, ſurprizing thoughts, fears and deſpairs will it fill me with, if after all I ſhould find my ſelf to be alive when my friends had cloſed my eyes, and ſhould preſently be hurried away into the company of thoſe ſpirits, which I had before derided and droll'd upon, and into the preſence of that God whoſe exiſtence I had boldly denied? What horrour and confuſion muſt it create, when my infidelity ſhall be confuted by ſuch a woſull experiment, and I ſhall find my ſelf ſuddenly entred into that endleſs ſtate which I would not here believe any thing of?

Were the arguments on both ſides equal, yet the hazards are infinitely unequal, ſince the one runs the chance of being for ever happy, the other runs the

chance of being eternally miſerable. Which one conſideration juſtifies the diſcretion of a religious man in renouncing and deſpiſing the glories and pleaſures of this world, though it were very uncertain whether there were another life after this. How much greater madneſs then muſt they needs be guilty of, who reject this doctrine of another life, againſt all the probabilities, reaſons, nay, demonſtrations of the truth of it? when they have as great evidence of the truth of it as its nature will admit of; when God from Heaven hath moſt plainly revealed it to them; when this revelation is confirmed by all the ſigns and teſtimonies they can reaſonably expect and demand; nay, when he hath implanted in their ſouls ſuch a lively apprehenſion of it, as that they muſt offer the greateſt force and violence to their own minds before they can bring themſelves to disbelieve it? nay, I believe, let the moſt reſolved ſinner labour and ſtruggle never ſo hard with himſelf to ſubdue and extirpate this natural perſuaſion of another life, yet after all his pains he will not be able wholly to root out all thoughts and fears of it. This ſhall ſuffice for the firſt ſort of perſons,

ſons, thoſe who doubt of, or deny this great fundamental of Religion. I proceed now,

II. To thoſe who profeſs to believe this immortal life, but yet doe it not really and heartily. And this I fear is the caſe of the generality of Chriſtians amongſt us. For it may well be enquired, what is the reaſon that this promiſe of eternal life, (than which there cannot be a greater) hath yet ſo little power upon mens minds, doth ſo little move their affections? what makes their endeavours after it ſo faint and languid? Are any of thoſe good things which men here court and ſeek after ſo deſirable and conſiderable as the glories and joys of Heaven? or are there any evils in this world that can vie terrours with Hell? this cannot be pretended ſince all the good or evil things of this world can onely make us happy or miſerable for a ſhort time, for this life at moſt, which is not to be named with living for ever either in unſpeakable happineſs or miſery. Whence is it then that Chriſtians are ſo ſtrangely cold and indifferent about theſe moſt weighty things of another life, as if they

were of no concernment to them? After all our ſearch we muſt reſolve it into one of theſe two cauſes.

Either that men, whatever they profeſs, do not heartily believe this Doctrine, or elſe that they do not duly conſider it.

(1.) Moſt men, whatever they profeſs or pretend, though they dare not renounce or deny it, yet are not heartily and thoroughly perſuaded of the certainty of this future ſtate. Their underſtandings were never rationally convinced of the truth of it, and ſo the belief of it is not firmly rooted and ſetled in their minds.

Would but God Almighty be graciouſly pleaſed to indulge to us a ſight of thoſe future glories and miſeries which he hath revealed in the Goſpel, this we imagine would certainly prevail for the conviction and reformation of all men. Would he give us, though but a ſhort and tranſient view of that bleſſed place where himſelf dwells, that we might but for a few moments behold the joys and tri-

triumphs of those happy souls that are admitted into his beatifick presence; or would he but open the gates of Hell, and once suffer us to look into those dismal receptacles of impure spirits, that so we might be eye and ear witnesses of their grievous torments and horrid despair, such a sight as this we doubt not would presently change us all, and make us whatever God requires us to be.

*But God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.* He governs men in a method suited to their reasonable natures, and hath given us such assurances of another life, as are abundantly sufficient to satisfy and convince the understandings of men, but yet may be resisted by those who have no mind, or are resolved not to believe it. For there could have been no trial of men, no discrimination made between the wise and considering, and the foolish and wicked, if the rewards of Religion had been present, or exposed to our senses. God will not force a faith upon us, as the sight of these things would do, but will have it to be a matter of choice, and an instance of vertue in us. No praise is due to them

who

who believe onely what they ſee. Such cannot be ſaid to believe God, but their own eyes: but rather *bleſſed are they*, ſaith our Saviour, *who have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* God hath denied us the ſight of theſe things to prove us, and try whether we dare truſt his promiſes and threatnings. Our belief therefore of this inviſible world, if we would have it effectual for the amendment of our hearts and lives, muſt be ſo ſtrong and powerfull as to ſerve inſtead of ocular and ſenſible demonſtration. (Whence the Apoſtle calls it, *Heb.* 1. 11. *the evidence of things not ſeen,*) that ſo the *things unſeen* which God hath revealed to us, may have the ſame effect upon us, (not as to degree, but the ſame real effect) as if the other world were always viſible to us.

Now our belief of any thing muſt neceſſarily be ſtronger or weaker according as the evidence is upon which it is believed; and that not onely as the evidence is in it ſelf, but as it is perceived by us. For however evident a thing may be in it ſelf, yet if it doth not appear ſo to us, our belief of it muſt be very uncertain and wavering, becauſe it is ground-

groundleſs. Since then the truths or principles of Religion, which relate to another life, are not things to be ſeen or felt, we can be aſſured of them onely by undeniable arguments and teſtimonies; about which we muſt uſe our reaſons, and our diſcerning and judging faculties before we can underſtand the force of them, or be really convinced by them. Not that there is any great difficulty in apprehending theſe arguments; but yet there is required ſuch attention of mind and ſerious thoughts about them, and a frequent revolving over the proofs and evidences of a future ſtate with ſuch diligence and carefull examination of them, as all men ordinarily uſe about other matters, wherein they are greatly concerned to find out the truth.

But now is any thing more plain, than that the generality of Chriſtians, who profeſs theſe Doctrines of Religion, are ſo far from being rationally by the force of arguments convinced of the truth of them, that very few amongſt them ever ſo much as ſet themſelves to enquire into the reaſons of their belief? They owe their faith ſolely to education, prepoſſeſ-

ſion,

ſion, inſtruction and example of others, take it up without any conſideration of the grounds and reaſons of it: and is it then at all wonderfull that this faith ſhould have but very little force or power on mens minds, which is thus received without any rational conviction of their underſtandings, which is thus weakly founded and ſupported? Any little blaſt will overthrow that houſe which is thus built upon the ſands.

I deny not but that a belief thus taken up upon truſt, and confirmed by a long and cuſtomary profeſſion of it, may be ſo ſtrong, and a man may be ſo reſolved in it, as that he will never ſtir from it. But then, I ſay, this is not the faith which our Saviour requires, or which God will accept of in thoſe who are capable of a better; and a *Mahometan*, born and bred at *Conſtantinople*, hath as good reaſon for his belief of the *Alcoran*, as ſuch a one hath for the belief of *Chriſtianity*. Such a faith is onely an obſtinacy in adhering to thoſe things which we were firſt taught, whether true or falſe, and is common to men in all Religions.

Our

Our underſtanding is the imperial and governing faculty of our ſouls. It is that which doth engage our wills and affections, and ſo conſequently by them move and excite us to action. When therefore our underſtanding doth aſſent to any truth upon clear and ſatisfactory evidence, being overpowred by the force of reaſon and argument, it muſt needs propound it with greater ſtrength and authority to the lower faculties, and ſo muſt have more powerfull influence upon all our affections and actions. Otherwiſe how can we expect but that any little reaſon ſhould be too hard for, and baffle that faith, which is grounded on no reaſon at all? or how can we think that thoſe things which we believe, but without any ſufficient convincing motive or evidence, ſhould outweigh thoſe things which we are more certain of, which we daily ſee, feel and experience, ſuch as are the preſent ſenſible pleaſures, and the viſible good and evil things of this life? This therefore is one great reaſon of the inefficacy of mens faith, that their belief of theſe great truths was never well rooted and fixed in their underſtandings.

(2.) If

(2.) If our underſtandings are ſo fully convinced of theſe truths, that we cannot any longer doubt of them, and yet this belief is not effectual for our reformation, the reaſon then muſt be onely becauſe we do not really conſider them. The underſtanding hath not ſuch an abſolute power over the will, as neceſſarily to determine it always to that which it judges beſt and fitteſt; but after our underſtandings have yielded, our wills may ſtubbornly hold out againſt the ſiege and batteries of the cleareſt evidence, and ſtrongeſt reaſons, if the truths propounded be contrary to our fleſhly luſts, and worldly intereſts.

For the will of man is a kind of middle faculty between the underſtanding and the bodily inclinations; and as it is moved by our underſtanding to follow and obey its dictates, ſo alſo it is moſt importunately ſolicited by our lower fleſhly appetites and luſts, craving their ſeveral ſatisfactions and gratifications, and by outward objects that continually thruſt themſelves upon us agreeable to thoſe deſires and propenſities. Hence ariſeth

ariſeth a great conflict between thoſe truths of Religion which are propounded by our underſtandings on the one ſide, and our inferiour ſenſitive faculties on the other. Our luſts being checked and croſſed by the hopes and fears of another life, make the ſhrewdeſt objections againſt the principles of Religion, and do with all their force and power oppoſe the entertainment of them in our minds, and on the ſucceſs of this conteſt doth eſpecially depend the efficacy of our faith.

Thus it was with very many amongſt the *Jews*, whilſt our bleſſed Saviour was alive here upon earth. They could not reſiſt thoſe undoubted teſtimonies which he gave of his being the Son of God; but yet the love of this world, or fear of ſufferings had ſo much greater power over their wills, as that they could never prevail with themſelves to become his Diſciples. St. *John* 12. 42, 43. *Among the chief rulers many believed on him, but becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the Synagogue. For they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.*

It

It is not enough therefore that these truths of Religion have ſubdued our underſtanding by the evidence of reaſon, but they muſt alſo conquer our will, and draw out its affections after them, before ever they can have any laſting effect upon our lives. For the affections of the will are the moſt immediate principles of all our actions, and therefore till our belief hath powerfully wrought upon theſe affections of love, deſire, hope, fear, it can have little or no influence upon our outward actions.

Now the way and means to obtain this conſent of our wills and affections to theſe truths thus propounded by our underſtandings, is often and moſt ſeriouſly to conſider the immenſe greatneſs of the happineſs offered to us; the extremity of the miſery threatned; how vaſtly it concerns us what our portion ſhall be in that eternal ſtate; how unſpeakably ſad and unpitied our condition will be, if we fooliſhly neglect providing for it; how infinitely the glory of Heaven doth ſurpaſs all the joys and pleaſures of this life. Theſe things, and the like, in a lively

lively manner repreſented unto, and fixed in our minds, will by degrees ſo captivate our wills and affections, as that we cannot but love and chuſe this future happineſs as our greateſt good; fear and fly from this eternal miſery as the greateſt evil that can poſſibly betide us.

Of ſuch infinite moment are the concerns of eternity, that if we do but patiently attend to them, and exerciſe our thoughts freely about them; if we will not ſuffer our luſt to bribe and byaſs our judgments or to ſtifle and choak theſe principles of Religion; they will at laſt awaken our conſciences, and prevail above all preſent temptations. And when our faith, by the frequent and ſerious conſideration of the mighty importance of theſe matters, and of their conſequence to us, hath made ſuch a complete conqueſt over our minds and wills, then our actions will of themſelves naturally follow. For men will live and act agreably to what they love, deſire, hope for, or fear moſt.

So effectually hath our Chriſtianity provided for the happineſs of all men,

that nothing can make us miſerable, but either not believing, or not conſidering the great arguments of Religion.

The different behaviour of men as to the promiſes of our Saviour concerning another life, I ſhall beg leave to illuſtrate by this plain ſimilitude.

Suppoſe a perſon of great credit and authority ſhould now appear amongſt us, and ſhould propound to us, that if we would follow him, entirely reſigning up our ſelves to be governed by him, he would ſafely conduct us all to a certain Countrey or Iſland, where we ſhould poſſeſs all that our hearts could wiſh, ſhould be all Kings and Princes, and flow in all manner of wealth, and enjoy an uninterrupted health; in a word, want nothing that men can fanſie could contribute any way to their complete ſatisfaction and contentment: and farther, that he ſhould give all the ſecurity that any reaſonable man could expect or demand that this was no vain promiſe or illuſion. Now ſome amongſt us will give no heed at all to what this man offers, nor be convinced by any reaſons or arguments

guments he can give them; but being either prejudiced againſt his perſon, or diſliking the conditions, ſtreight reject him for a Deceiver and Impoſtour. Theſe are the Atheiſts and unbelievers.

Others are indeed convinced that all this is likely to be true, they cannot ſee any ſufficient cauſe to doubt of it; but yet they enjoy ſuch conveniences, and are ſo taken with their preſent circumſtances here, as that they will not quit them for theſe hopes. Theſe are the fond lovers of this world.

Others are willing to go to this place, but they think it time enough yet. They would tarry and live here where they are, as long as they can; and when they can ſtay no longer here, then they would be glad to be wafted to this fortunate Iſland. Theſe are they that defer their repentance till a death-bed.

Others acknowledge that there is ſuch a place, where a man may live as happily as this perſon deſcribes, but they ſuſpect that he doth not ſhew the right way to it. They would find out a nearer and

ſhorter cut to this Countrey. Theſe are Hereticks and Schiſmaticks.

Others are reſolved to venture with him, and begin the journey; but meeting with ſome difficulties and dangers in the paſſage, they are ſoon diſcouraged and frighted, and return home. *Theſe are they who receive the word* of God *gladly, but when tribulation and perſecution ariſe, by and by they are offended.*

Laſtly, a few amongſt us wholly relying upon this Perſon's promiſes, and preferring them before all preſent poſſeſſions and enjoyments, forſake all their concerns and relations here, and abſolutely give up themſelves to his guidance. And when in the paſſage they meet with any dangers or hardſhips, croſs winds or ſtorms; though this may make them ſtagger a little, and fill them with doubts and fears; yet they are reſolved ſtill to go on, and venture all upon it. Theſe, and theſe onely, are the true believers.

There are many degrees of faith, but the leaſt degree of ſaving faith is, when the conſideration of another world is become

come our moſt prevailing intereſt, and is the main principle that gives law and rule to all our converſation. Let none then think to be ſaved by ſuch a faith as the very Devils in Hell have, and yet remain Devils ſtill. They believe theſe great truths of Chriſtianity as really and as much as thou doſt, who onely aſſenteſt to them in thy underſtanding, and confeſſeſt them with thy mouth, but denieſt and contradicteſt them in thy life and practice.

To pretend to believe this great doctrine of another life which ſhall never end, and not to govern our ſelves by this perſuaſion, is the moſt unaccountable and prodigious folly that a reaſonable creature can be guilty of; according to that famous ſaying of a great man in this caſe, That *the ſtrangeſt monſter in nature was a ſpeculative Atheiſt*, one that denies the being of a God and a future ſtate, *excepting one, and that was the practical Atheiſt* who profeſſed to believe both, but lived as if he was certain there were neither.

Nor indeed is the difference between them great. The one, *the Atheiſt*, winks hard, and ſo ruſhes blindfold upon eternal ruine. The other, *the wicked believer*, runs madly upon it with both his eyes wide open. How inexcuſable muſt they be at the laſt day; what plea can they offer for themſelves, who obſtinately refuſed that happineſs, which yet they acknowledged to be infinitely beyond all that this world could bleſs its moſt darling favourites with? who wilfully precipitated themſelves into thoſe evils and miſeries which they had a plain foreſight of.

I conclude this head with that anſwer which a defender of *Atheiſtical* Principles is ſaid once to have given to a companion of his, who freely indulged himſelf in the ſame vitious courſe of life the *Atheiſt* did; but yet took upon him to wonder how one that denied the being of a God, and of a future life, could quiet his mind in ſuch a deſperate eſtate. *Nay rather*, ſays the *Atheiſt*, *it is much more ſtrange how you can quiet your mind, or ſleep contentedly in ſuch a vitious courſe of life*

*life as I ſee you lead, whilſt you believe ſuch things as you ſay you do.* And ſo indeed one would think that it was impoſſible for ſuch a man to live in peace, without laying aſide either his faith or his ſins. Now the *Atheiſt* chuſes to lay aſide his faith, that he may ſin more quietly; the true *Chriſtian* lays aſide his ſins, that they may not defeat his hopes: and which of theſe two acts more wiſely, if we will not ſee in this our day, the final event and iſſue of things will certainly convince us to our everlaſting regret and confuſion. Thus much for thoſe who do profeſs to believe another life, but do it not really and heartily.

III. All that remains is to apply my ſelf in a few words to thoſe who do heartily and conſtantly believe this great truth of another life after this; who not onely aſſent to this doctrine with their underſtandings, but have made this future happineſs their ultimate choice and deſire. And to them I need not ſay much; for this faith alone will always teach them what to doe, without the help of an inſtructour. It will e'en force them to doe well, without a guide or monitour.

This will fortify our minds againſt all the temptations we may meet with from this world, or any of its bewitching enjoyments. So that that man who hath his eternal ſtate always in his eye, is ſet above the power of this world's frowns or ſmiles. He can neither be tempted by the ſufferings of this life, nor yet enticed by any of its alluring charms. Can he, whoſe thoughts are fixed upon thrones and kingdoms, and immortal glory, be diverted by the gay baubles, or glittering toys which this world preſents him with? It offers him infinitely too little. When the ſoul once by faith is mounted beyond the ſtars into that place where God and his Saviour dwells, how mean and contemptible, how vile and ſordid do all things here below appear? when this whole earth ſeems but a point, how next to nothing is that ſmall pittance of it which any one man can poſſeſs or enjoy? Faith looks beyond this preſent ſcene of things; beholds this world diſſolv'd, and all the glory and pomp of it vaniſhing; and this curtain being drawn, there appears to his view a new world, wherein are joys and pleaſures and honours ſubſtantial

ſtantial and eternal; the proſpect and fore-thought of which, rectifies his judgment about theſe inferiour things, and begets very ſlight and undervaluing thoughts of all things on this ſide Heaven.

This faith will inſpire us with ſtrength and activity, and carry us out even beyond our ſelves; will animate us with ſuch courage and reſolution, as that we ſhall deſpiſe all dangers and difficulties, and think eternal happineſs a good bargain, whatever pains or trouble it may coſt us to purchaſe it. Such great hopes ſet before us, will animate us with an undaunted bravery and courage, and enable us to work wonders.

This conquers the love of life it ſelf, which is moſt deeply implanted in our natures; for what will not a man give or part with for the ſaving of his life? Yet they who have been endued with this faith, have *not counted their lives dear to them, ſo that they might finiſh their courſe with joy.*

I have

I have not time now to ſet before you the trophies and victories which this faith hath atchieved; you may find many of them recorded in the famous 11th chapter to the *Hebrews*, where the Apoſtle for the encouragement of all true believers, propounds to us the brave examples of the holy *Patriarchs* and *Prophets* of old, *who through faith ſubdued kingdoms, wrought righteouſneſs, out of weakneſs were made ſtrong, were tortured not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better reſurrection, had trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, yea moreover of bonds and impriſonments: they were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the ſword, wandred about in ſheep-skins and goat-skins, afflicted, deſtitute and tormented.* Theſe and many more like theſe were the exploits of the Saints under the *old Teſtament*, who had not ſo clear a revelation of this eternal ſtate, as we now have under the Goſpel. But far greater yet, and more ſtupendious are the triumphs of faith in the holy lives and patient deaths of the bleſſed *Apoſtles*, and primitive *Martyrs* and *Confeſſours*, who with invincible conſtancy endured pains and

and torments to flesh and bloud insupportable, onely assisted and upheld by the grace of God, and a lively faith in this promise of his son *Jesus*. They clap'd their hands, and sang praises in the midst of scorching flames, they *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods*, and gave God thanks *that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name:* and without doubt God's grace and the same lively faith would produce in us the very same effects, and enable us to doe and to suffer the same things with the same joy and resolution.

But farther, This faith by degrees moulds and transforms the mind into a likeness to these heavenly objects, it advances and raises our spirits, so that they become truly great and noble, and makes us, as St. *Peter* tells us, *partakers of a divine nature.*

It filleth the soul with constant peace and satisfaction, so that in all conditions of life, a good man can feast himself with unseen joys and delights, which the worldly man neither knows, nor can relish. This makes him content with any

any ſmall allowance of this worlds goods and glad if by any hard ſhift he can rub through this world till he comes to his Kingdom.

He is but very little concerned about theſe ſeemingly grand affairs of this life, which ſo much take up and buſie other mens thoughts and time. He converſeth moſt with inviſible objects, and with them finds that ſolid and laſting comfort, which all outward things can neither give nor take away.

He hath ſomething to uphold and chear his ſpirit under all worldly calamities and diſtractions; and when he is wearied with the impertinencies of this life, or is not pleaſed with things here below; he can retire himſelf into the other world, and there entertain his mind with thoſe raviſhing joys that never cloy nor ſatiate.

Nay, this faith arms a man againſt the fear of death; it ſtrips that *King of terrours* of all his grim looks; for he conſiders it onely as God's meſſenger to knock off his fetters, to free him from this

this fleſhly priſon, and to conduct him to that bleſſed place, where he ſhall be more happy than he can wiſh or deſire to be, and that for ever.

All this and much more than I can now ſpeak, will this faith do, where it is ſincere and hearty. It will ſerve us inſtead of ſight; it will afford us a fore-taſt of this immortal happineſs; it will give us preſent entrance into heaven in part, and at laſt a full and complete fruition of it.

Oh then let it be moſt plainly ſeen by our words, by our works, by all we doe, whereever we are, what our faith and hope is. Let it appear to all men that *we walk by faith, not by ſight* or ſenſe. Senſe is a mean, low, narrow principle, confin'd to this preſent time, and this lower earth; it can reach no higher than theſe outward viſible things, nor can it look farther than things preſent. But *the juſt ſhall live by faith*; they ſteer their courſe and govern their lives, not by what they ſee, but by what they believe and hope for, looking beyond things temporal for thoſe things that are eternal.

Let

Let us not be aſhamed of this our deſign and aim before all men, that whatever others think or ſay of us for it, we are reſolved to be happy, not onely for a few days or years, but for ever; that we will ſo uſe this world as thoſe that muſt ſhortly leave it; that we will ſo improve and husband our time, as remembring that it will ſoon be no more, but be ſwallowed up in eternity: and did the ſtupid world know and believe what you doe, they would no longer wonder at your being ſo much moved in a caſe of ſuch unſpeakable and everlaſting conſequence.

Bleſſed be God who hath ſet ſuch mighty hopes before us, who hath given us ſuch glorious promiſes, who hath made ſuch a plain and clear revelation of this eternal life by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and hath by him taught us the true way of obtaining it; who himſelf became to us an example of that holy life he preſcribed to us, and after he had ſuffered for our tranſgreſſions in our nature, entred into the higheſt heavens to prepare manſions of glory for all the faithfull followers of him

him. To whom therefore with the *Father* and *Holy Ghoſt*, one eternal God, be aſcribed by us and all men, all praiſe, thankſgiving and obedience for evermore. *Amen.*

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*THE END.*

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